At The Sign of The Hobby-Horse

By Elizabeth Bisland

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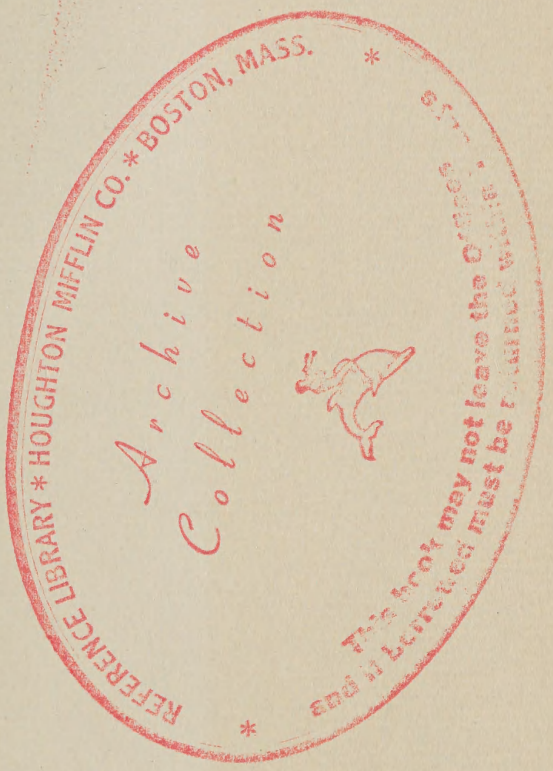
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By Elizabeth Bisland

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AT THE SIGN OF THE HOBBY-HORSE

At The Sign of The Hobby Horse

By

Elizabeth Bisland

Author of 'The Life and Letters of Lafcadio Hearn' 'A Candle of Understanding' 'The Secret Life' etc.

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SECOND IMPRESSION

To C. W. W.

"MASTER OF THE HORSE"

THIS BOOK IS AFFECTIONATELY

DEDICATED

PREFACE

FROM earliest childhood my favourite exercise has been what might properly be called ligno-equestrianism. As soon as articulate speech was at my command, it was my practice to catch and mount, bare backed, any small, wild hobby which might happen to graze in the vicinity, and, with beating heart and flying hair, to ride it round and round the narrow enclosure of my immature ideas. Though frequently run away with, and often thrown or kicked by the vicious little beasts, my passion for this diversion suffered no diminution. Grown to maturity, my most serious efforts have been devoted to the collection and propagation of a stud of these interesting animals. I can now boast of a stable containing a long string of sleek and able cattle (for the hobby breeds freely in captivity), and I have a strong-minded and tireless mount for every mood.

Settled in the saddle, I have covered a wide territory. Sometimes at a snail's pace, and with hanging bridle, I explore the pleasant country-side; passing those who are laboriously clearing new lands of science, or carefully tilling old fields of thought; always experiencing a cheerful satisfaction at the

reflexion that, unlike these, I am not tied to the soil of exact facts or demonstrable truths, but may wander where fancy leads.

Sometimes I mount to tilt pleasantly against conventional windmills, which whirl me head over heels. Again I chase small deer, which afford more exercise than the value of the quarry may justify. Or I cheerfully pursue the elusive shadows that drive across the landscape.

At other times, with hands low and feet well home, I gallop, *ventre-à-terre*, straight across country. There may be high hedges of tradition, or ticklish ditches of error, in this wild path, but owning none but true-bred hunting hobbies, at a touch of the heel they clear fences without flicking a rail, and take off cleanly from crumbling banks, and we hardly pause in our stride until we arrive — breathless and triumphant — at nowhere in particular.

E. B.

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AT THE SIGN OF THE HOBBY-HORSE

I

THE MORALS OF THE MODERN HEROINE

WHEN a "stream of tendency" manifests itself in literature, investigation usually leads one to distant fountains as its source, and the origin of the stream may often prove to be some impulse not obvious in the outward manifestations.

To find this underlying impulse is always more interesting than to study the actual form of the manifestation itself. As an example: I was for years unable to penetrate the dry and dreary fastnesses of any history of America or any history of American literature. At about the third chapter I always fell into a complete coma of ennui, and until very recently I remained entirely ignorant of what happened after the settlement of Jamestown, and owned not even a groping idea of who succeeded Michael Wigglesworth upon the completion of his cheerful epic concerning the Day of Doom. The

difficulty was, the moment one opened a hungry mental mouth, every writer on those two portentous topics immediately quenched appetite with dry ashes of uncorrelated facts, and one promptly and vociferously declined to go on with the meal. This at least was true until Woodrow Wilson and Barrett Wendell recognized what was lacking. Now I can rattle you off whole folios of information on these hitherto detested topics. Wilson's five big volumes are as vivid as a novel. One was driven to the consumption of midnight electricity in order to follow the adventures of that fascinating Virginian, George Washington, or neglected social duties to make sure which side won in the War of 1812.

Wendell, too, can take one unresistingly through all the wearying provincialism of early American letters, showing why we lay so far apart from the rich stream of English thought; why a seccant morality forbade the flowers of beauty to blossom upon our transplanted tree. It was merely a question of dry subjects being handled by minds sufficiently vigorous to digest a large mass of incidents, to point out the origins of facts and their tendencies.

It ought to be possible, dealt with in this way, to find even the modern novel interesting. That the general impulse visible in this form of literary

expression is toward the breaking down of the old accepted laws of behaviour is a clamant fact. Why this should be so it might be amusing, if not instructive, to discover.

Fundamental morals, of course, alter little from age to age: some general law of conduct being obviously necessary to make feasible the life in common. Thou shalt not kill; thou shalt not steal; nor lie, nor covet thy neighbour's wife, forever remain the four cornerstones of society. But while these basic rules must always serve as what a young Japanese poet, in a moment of lyric ardour, has denominated "the social glue," there is no one thing more subject to the vagaries of fashion than the smaller morals, so to speak, — those refinements of thought and behaviour which form the morals of the non-criminal classes, — of such folk as ourselves, who have daily to beg that we be not led into temptation, but who rarely even contemplate any real egregiousness of conduct.

Can one imagine, for example, any two standards further apart — more separated by the whole diameter of thought — than those of, say, a wealthy young New Yorker who interests himself in reform-work in the East-side slums, and those of a young Roman patrician of the time of the great Julius? And yet both of these men would give adherence

to the simpler code, that murder, theft, lying, and cowardice were unthinkable temptations. The Roman would look upon the modern sociologist as a fantastic fool, and the earnest young reformer would consider the Italian as no better than a gross and selfish pagan; and yet both would be gentlemen, with a high sense of duty. These fashions in ethics must naturally find their expression in literature; that mirror of the human mind in which we see reflected not only our own faces, but the faces of all our ancestors. In which we behold the likenesses of those shadowy entities which stretch endlessly behind us, layer on layer of life; out of which we have emerged, — ourselves by one more shadow, — and from which in turn other endless processions of figures are to appear. It is into literature, then, that we must look to find depicted our moral lineaments, and in it to see formulated the semblance of our ideals, and the ideals of those who have created us and our aspirations.

In our European civilization there has always been a deliciously contradictory attitude in the mind of the male — until recently almost the exclusive maker of literature — toward his female. While never willing to admit her equality with himself, either mental or moral, he has yet constantly required of her, has constantly urged upon her, a

sublimation of behaviour which he was amiably reluctant to demand of himself or of his fellows. The *ewigweibliche* — the eternal feminine — of his dream has seesawed between the passionless goddess and the greedy child. Grey-eyed Athene, — pure wisdom and justice, — "stern daughter of the voice of God," and that naughty blooming lady who came glowing from the sea to set all men by the ears, were equally his ideal of our unlucky sex. Naturally, it has kept us busy trying to assume both parts satisfactorily; and, considering how earnestly we have endeavoured to meet these conflicting demands upon our moral talents, it does seem hard that we have earned only a general and invidious reputation for capriciousness and incomprehensibility. "*Souvent femme varie*"? — One would think so indeed, under such stress for versatility!

In classic letters one finds the heroine, the ideal woman, varying from Antigone to Medea; from Phædra to Penelope; and, tucked in between these extremes of virtues and vices on the heroic scale, an endless chain of rosy, smiling, comfortable young persons, with the morals of rabbits and the mentality of butterflies. From the relish with which the authors lingered over the charms of these ladies' persons, and the piquancy of their daring improprieties, one rather suspects that on the whole the latter were

the ones they found most to their taste, though in loftier moments they imagined their heroines in nobler mould.

The coming of Christianity swept both types into the Index Expurgatorius, and substituted the hysteric saint of visions and self-macerations. Here was a brand-new character for the overworked female to enact; yet, in her facile good-nature, she threw herself into the required attitude with the old enthusiasm. The very quaintest heroine of all fiction is to be found in the Lives of the Saints; meanwhile the Early Fathers were calling her by the most opprobrious names, — damning her up and down, — and she patiently going into ecstasies and never answering back! No wonder the male of our kind has said we were incomprehensible!

But the nun, the mystic, and the saint grow shadowy at last, and who is this lovely lady we see stealing through the vague golden dawn of the Renaissance? Ah! — behold the "white feet of Nicolette" stepping shyly to meet that sweet knight Aucassin. Behind her follows golden-headed Guinevere, the Lily Maid of Astolat, the Lady of Shalott, and that fair company amidst whom we discern Beatrice, Iseult of the silver hands, bella Simonetta, and La Joconde. Personally, these are my favourites of all *les belles dames de temps jadis*, with their braided hair

and their folded hands, their meek lashes and their fine pale brows; ladies *moulct douce*, who were all fire and dew, all passion and purity and tender grace: —

> "Was a lady such a lady,
> Cheeks so round, and lips so red,
> On the neck the small face buoyant
> Like a bell flower o'er its bed?"

cries Browning in an ecstasy of reminiscence of them, and adds wistfully, —

> "What's become of all the gold, used to hang and brush their bosoms?
> I feel chilly, and grown old."

But they too passed, and are with the snows of yester-year; and with the full day of the Renaissance the frisky young person of classic times returned, and with her the great-statured woman of heroic moral inches, to share the homage of the man in love with the shadow of antiquity. It was a sort of a hybrid cross between the two, who stalked and strutted through the interminable pages of Mademoiselle de Scudéry's romances and the verbose volumes of Richardson. Bernard Shaw says that the men of the eighteenth century did not regard woman as an individual but as an institution, and the heroine of the eighteenth-century romance, "the delicate female," was merely the reflection, the feminine shadow, of the Man of Feeling — that intolerable prig, "whose

mild eye," the poet tells us, "beamed with benevolence," and in whose bosom pulsed

> "That ecstatic and exulting throb
> Which virtue's votary feels when he sums up
> The thoughts and actions of a well-spent day."

Fancy the pompous self-consciousness of a person who experienced ecstatic and exulting throbs because he had behaved himself for twenty-four hours! Naturally, the heroines had to be of a very superior quality of institution to live up to this sort of thing.

But of a virtue! — Witness Clarissa of the iron-bound impeccability. And of a meekness and propriety! — Of which the heroine of Sir Charles Grandison is an example raised to the *n*th power. Poor dear Miss Byron waits patiently through five quarto volumes for her magnificent young man to commit himself.

"Sir Charles conducted me to the cedar parlour, where were already my aunt and my grandmama. He sat down, and with a manly yet respectful air, his voice gaining strength as he proceeded, thus delivered himself: —

"'Ever admirable Miss Byron, never was a man more particularly circumstanced than he before you. . . . Yet in so particular a situation, although what I have to say, may, I presume, be collected from what you know of my story; and though my humble application to Miss Byron

for her favour, and to you ladies, for your interest with her, have not been discouraged, something, however, may be necessary to be said in this audience, of the state of my own heart for the sake of this dear lady's delicacy and yours. I am not insensible to beauty, but beauty of person only never yet had power over more than my eye; to which it gave a pleasure like that which it receives from the flowers of a gay parterre. . . . Had not my heart been out of reach of personal attractions, Miss Byron in the first hour that I saw her would have left me no other choice; but when I had the honour of conversing with her I observed in her mind and behaviour that true dignity, delicacy, and noble frankness, which I ever thought characteristic of the sex, but never met with in equal degree but in one lady. I soon found that my admiration of her fine qualities was likely to lead me into a gentler yet more irresistible passion. I found Miss Byron's graces had stolen so imperceptibly into my heart as already to have made an impression on it too deep for my tranquility.'"

And there are six more pages of this exhilarating love-making before he has done, and the ever admirable Miss Byron can seize the chance to get in a word edgewise, and accept him before he can draw breath to go on.

Here was the goddess again; in respectable, genteel, eighteenth-century guise this time; and to counterbalance her, Fielding revived that naughty, pleasing contrast after which the masculine mind

lusted when it laid aside its wig and sword and unbent itself over its punch.

By the time the Early Victorian period was reached, virtue, propriety, and colourlessness reigned supreme. The naughty charmer was for the moment in exile; but in the meanwhile, for the first time in the history of literature, women had begun to write about themselves. Miss Burney's Evelina was barely distinguishable from her man-made congeners, but with Miss Austen one began to catch a glimpse of what women thought of themselves and of other members of their sex. It is the quality of genius to be of no period, and Miss Austen's women are as modern and as ancient as are the lovely creations of Shakespeare. Elizabeth Bennet and Miss Emma Woodhouse are the sort of women we play bridge with, serve with on charitable committees, and whom our brothers marry; just those good, kind, friendly creatures whom we ask to dinner, and whose discipline of their children we enjoy criticizing. So one is hardly justified in judging the woman's heroine in literature by those of that rare feminine bird, a genius.

The first Victorian woman important in letters was George Eliot, whom Sidney Lanier and John Addington Symonds, and even William Dean Howells, have thought worthy of the highest place. But

already two men, much greater than she, had broken the mould of the impeccable heroine whom Scott, for all his skill, had been willing to accept as the wooden figure-head of his romances.

Dickens swung between a plump, rosy, cosy, silly little dear — the sort of person who is a Dolly Varden at sixteen, becoming inevitably, by the lapse of two-score years, another Mrs. Nickleby — and the tall, pale, grave person who is Agnes when all goes well, but is apt to be transformed into a Lady Dedlock by untoward circumstances. Thackeray, too, had once for all drawn a real woman in Becky Sharp, — not a good woman, but a real one, of the worser sort, — and in Bessie, the protagonist of that little lauded, much undervalued story of "Lovel the Widower," had pictured perhaps the most veracious virtuous woman in all English literature.

So that George Eliot had models which served her well when she broke away from the conventions in "Janet's Repentance," and when she conceived that very modern young lady, Gwendolen Harleth. Gwendolen was something of a portent, and was so regarded, I recall, when she loomed upon my childish horizon. I remember seeing my elders shake their heads over her vanity and recklessness, her insubordination, and her spiritual aspirations ; though I think they hardly realized what a prolific parent she

was to become of restless, yearning young persons, much concerned as to the state of their souls, and making all their relations desperately uncomfortable by their unbalanced antics. She came upon us at a time which I have since learned to call "the Blue-Bow period." That is to say, the woman who then reigned in our hearts, and who adorned the short story of our periodical literature, used to straighten out the tangles of her existence by the simple expedient of putting a blue bow into her adorably curling hair. If she found another woman stealing her husband's affections, she calmly checkmated the deadly wiles of the wicked rival by pinning on a blue bow; the effect of this proving so hypnotic that the fascinated male returned at once and permanently to his domestic allegiance. It would cure a husband of drinking habits; it lightened the gloom of financial misfortunes; it even atoned for any little stepping aside from the path of strict wifely duty on her own part. In any stress of circumstance the purchase of a yard of ribbon proved a sort of silken and powerful "God Bless Our Home!"

How deliciously simple it would seem if we might straighten out our twentieth-century marital complications by a mere moment at the bargain counter!

It may be imagined how the modernly neurotic Gwendolen Harleth startled so simple an atmosphere

as this, and one wonders what Nora of "A Doll's House" would have thought of such millinery expedients. Perhaps if poor Thorvald had thought to put a blue bow into *his* hair, Nora might have stayed at home after all!

The goddess and the pretty, immoral little hussy were not all forgotten by their male literary adorers; but the "mob of gentlewomen, who wrote with ease," which sprang up, a thick, lettered crop, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, declined to be narrowed down to two sharply contrasting types of the sex, and one began at last to get what Meredith calls "the fine shades" of feminine self-revelation.

Some very remarkable shades one has got, it must be confessed. We have had some tingling shocks to our old comfortable prepossessions in the last half-century. As early as the days of the Brontë sisters, the ugly woman had issued a startling declaration of the right of the ill-featured female to emotion and romance. Up to that day, none but the beautiful were supposed to move in the enchanted *pays du tendre*. Research fails to show, in all the literature of the male, one really plain heroine. She must be fair or she could not hope to be considered as an applicant for the place. So it was considered immensely piquant when the ugly, passionate little governess from York-

shire actually pictured another ugly little governess inspiring a passion and posing as a romantic figure. Since then has occurred another revolution made in favour of the *Femme de Trente Ans*. A heroine used to be, in the old days of masculine literary rule, not only beautiful, but, as a necessary concomitant, deliciously young. The blooming chits had it all their own way. The woman of thirty had by that age either made her romantic market or else retired sombrely into the innocuous desuetude of old maidenhood, and served literary needs only as a ridiculous and jealous foil, as a duenna, or as an assistant of the emotional stresses of her younger sister. She passed secret *billets-doux*, or waited to warn while one trembled at a rendezvous by an aged oak under the midnight moon. Mrs. Craik, better known to her large clientèle as Miss Mulock, was, if memory serves me rightly, the first to have the courage to suggest that a woman might suffer from romantic emotions after twenty-five without being wholly abnormal ; and so far have we progressed beyond the mid-Victorian ideals that that erstwhile youthful dweller in the limelight is now supposed to be meekly at school, and not troubling her pigtailed juvenile head about matters fit only for her elders. Even women of forty are allowed to have affairs, and that charming romance known as "The Baby's Grandmother" was

received without derision; it even inspired sympathy.

We are now in the period of the full emancipation of the heroine — an emancipation which she owes largely to her own sex. We have at last a copious body of documents setting forth women's impressions as to woman's real nature, and it would be extremely interesting to take up these documents for careful comparison and examination, and submit them to learned bodies for discussion; to analyze, generalize, and philosophize upon them and discover what has been contributed by them to the sum of human truth. Do their self-revelations cast any real light upon the complexities of the soul of that half of the race which men have declared to be capricious and incomprehensible; which they confess in their famous toast to be the unsolvable conundrum: "Woman! We can't make her out, but we 'll never give her up"?

Two men have written of woman from this modern aspect, but it is safe to say that Hedda Gabler and Candida would never have existed if the Brontës and George Eliot had not broken the ground on which they stand; and yet, in the conceptions of both men can be discerned in new guise, traces of the old alterating male dreams of the female: Hedda Gabler, Nora, and the rest, are but the old domi-

nating goddess type subtly modernized and masquerading as contemporary Norwegians, while Candida and her sisters are suspiciously like present-day versions of the supple unscrupulous jade of classic letters.

We must read women's books if we would get new light upon the woman question; if we would study the moral aspect of the matter, and consider the soul of the sex from a really new angle of vision. And reading these women's books by the light of our old prejudices, we certainly have the startled sensation that we have heretofore been moving about in a feminine world unrealized. Either those mild brows have been concealing the most astonishing things, or else the woman of our epoch has suffered a sudden change into something new and strange, and there would seem to be no tie of heredity between the mother of yesterday and the daughter of to-day.

Patient Griselda was long exhibited to us, in the era of the masculine domination of letters, as a most admirable and to-be-duly-copied person. She was a proof that persistent meek acquiescence could overcome at last the tyrannical spirit of her master; but a pretty wide acquaintance with the books written by women does not include even one lady of letters who urges meekness upon her sisters as a desirable virtue. Quite the contrary. What Henry Arthur

Jones calls "that rabble of petticoats," which move through modern fiction, clothe ladies who have a most vivid idea of their own value, and an equally vivid idea of having their own way. If Petruchio were to throw plates about in our time with any idea of subduing the modern Katherine, he would probably find himself promptly ducking to avoid their swift return, or would be haled into court to show cause why he should n't pay persistent alimony to salve the wounds made upon his better half's feelings by what the divorce court terms "intolerable cruelty." No; meekness under oppression is not a virtue of the modern heroine.

Unquestioning loyalty to the male was another belauded virtue of the heroine of the past. She followed her mate cheerfully to the battlefield, the debtor's prison, or even the scaffold. When a gentleman cheated at cards, drank more than was good for him, flung away his substance in riotous living, or otherwise made things uncomfortable, the virtuous heroine of the past immediately took in plain sewing (she never appeared to be capable of any other kind), changed her residence to a garret, and lived shiveringly on what was known as "crusts"; but she spoke no word of reproach, and did the uncomplaining-martyr act in its extremest form of aggravating high-mindedness. The path of the moral transgressor is

not smoothed in this fashion in our day. He has domesticated the Recording Angel, and the Critic on the Hearth will condone no moral laxities. Not only must his private conduct square with the rigidest rules of morality, but even in his finances and his politics he must exhibit a standard of behaviour so lofty as must prove exhausting even to a hero. In a dozen recent tales the hero is called upon to resist the most enticing political and financial temptations, at the peril of punishment at the hands of the heroine, who, whether she be his wife or his sweetheart, demands of her mate a meticulous and subtly perfect conscientiousness; and if he fails to measure up to her exacting level, he gets his punishment, infallibly. The famous Nora demands even more, of course. Poor Thorvald has not only to be honest himself, but must be sufficiently high-minded to understand why she should n't be; and Candida's husband is expected to be so pure of heart as to condone a flirtation such as he himself would not for one instant be permitted to indulge in. It would almost seem as if the old rôles were completely reversed, and it were now the hero who is under obligation to readjust his loyalty to any and all demands made by his exacting heroine. And he gets small sympathy for his efforts. It never occurs to any one to be sentimental over Thorvald, or to shed tears of

sympathy for Mr. Candida. They are not buoyed up by any comforting sense that the pathetic nature of their sufferings will "make Celia's tender eyes complain," or rouse indignation against the trenchant ladies who have brought their proud masculinity so low. Sweet sixteen will not weep over them, nor chivalrous boyhood burn with indignation at their wrongs.

In a very recent and popular book by a lady novelist, "The Fruit of the Tree," the heroine, a trained nurse, uses her hypodermic needle to put an end to the atrocious sufferings of a young married woman hurt in an accident; and after marrying the widower, he discovers that she did so shorten the life of his first wife. The nurse feels no compunction for her act, and in fact resents her new husband's qualms about it; and we are made to feel that he is rather a cad to be so squeamish over so small a matter, and before long he sees it that way himself, properly begs pardon, and is restored to favour.

It was curious to observe the attitude of the public — particularly of the feminine public — at the representation of Maeterlinck's "Monna Vanna," some few years back. This mediæval Judith being called upon to sacrifice her virtue to save her people, her husband expressed what — so it seemed to me

— were very natural objections. He was entirely willing to give his own life, but he was most reluctant to purchase his own, or his people's lives, at a price he held dearer than theirs or his. When she returned from the conqueror's tent, to which she had gone without her husband's consent, and announced that the suddenly generous ruffian had spared her, neither she, nor the women in the audience, seemed to experience any emotion other than contempt or disgust for the poor, maddened husband who refused to accept her account of the meeting. And no one seemed to feel that his wrongs lay in the fact that she had been trying to save him through his own dishonour. That she had *not* dishonoured him was merely an accident, and not through her intention. The general attitude seemed to be that he was making a great fuss about nothing, and behaving in the most tiresome and ridiculous manner.

To come to a still more serious matter, in this new view of the relation of the sexes, — the very keystone of the arch, fidelity of the person and the affections, — we find that in this respect also the modern heroine has brought about a complete *bouleversement* of the old order. It used to be conceded that different codes of honour existed for the two sexes. Chastity was the cornerstone of feminine morals; once it was removed, the whole fabric fell

in ruins. That sound, the building might be flawed, but it was respected. Fibs were but foibles; carelessness in money matters was venial. Backbiting, cowardice, narrowness, bigotry, were pardonable faults, if in matters concerning the other sex one was impeccable. On the other hand, man, being after all but an imperfectly monogamous animal, might have a straying eye and remain a gentleman, if no charge of lying, cowardice, or dishonesty could be proved. If, however, he cheated at cards, his life among his fellows was as completely at an end as was that of his mate "when lovely woman stooped to folly." How many times has not the tear of sweet sensibility flowed at the sorrows of that poor lady, who, having lost her claim to kindness and respect, wandered in the snow, or crept home to die on the outraged husband's or father's doorstep. No repentance could avail to replace her in the high estate she had forfeited.

> "The only art her guilt to cover,
> To hide her shame from every eye,
> To bring repentance to her lover,
> And wring his bosom, was to die."

The scarlet letter marked her as with the brand of Cain; and, like the cheater at cards, she must forever wander an exile from the warm precincts of

respectability, later heroism not availing to win back the lost regard unless that heroism led to a prompt demise.

The man who cheats at cards still roams an exile, but the modern heroine by no means submits to atone for her follies by accompanying him. About ten years ago, she arose in her might and declined to accept judgement from a censorious and hypocritic world. "The Superfluous Woman" was one of the first books whose heroine declared her independence of the elder morals. She had her little fling, and then asked what we were going to do about it; and we sat with our astonished mouths open and had no answer ready. Grant Allen echoed with "The Woman Who Did,"—and she did very naughty things indeed; and once again we found ourselves out of our depth in the sudden liquefaction of all our old predilections. Since which time the modern heroine has taken the key of the fields, and is neither to hold nor to bind. The Hester Prynne of to-day would make scarlet letters fashionable, contract an excellent marriage, and shortly be leading mothers' meetings in Mr. Arthur Dimmesdale's popular church; and the very modernest heroine, like the protagonist of "Life's Shop-Window," would probably haughtily refuse altogether to be, in the old parlance, "made an honest woman of," and would reject mar-

riage entirely, as too cramping to her new-found liberty.

Females of the very lightest character may set up as heroines in honourable heroic circles in our tolerant day, and we look forward with prickling interest to see what new form of delinquency these vigorous ladies will next render respectable by their potent patronage.

These fantastic ethical excursions are in part a natural reaction against a weary period of Victorian virtue that almost amounted to virtuosity, and partly a sowing of literary wild oats by heady femininity, new to the liberty of the pen and not yet settled down to the sobered middle age of letters. But there are underlying reasons more serious than these: within the last half-century has occurred a silent, slow upheaval of all the bases of our attitude to life, and the gentler sex have not had any exclusive solidity of footing in the shifting of the moral centres of gravity. They too have been casting about for a new horizon, for new standards of behaviour and of personal responsibility, while science and its disquieting discoveries have been levelling the old heights and filling the depths. In the jumbling and readjustment of the patterns of thought, the old models have become inadequate to their needs. A period of flux is of course inevitable. Eventu-

ally, no doubt, the heroine who is the ideal of woman herself — the expression of her own highest consciousness of aspiration for herself — will be very unlike the contrasted goddess and rogue; a very different person, too, from the fantastic, unclassifiable individual offered us now. She will clarify into something more admirable than the woman now imagined by women, for the modern heroine does not seem to have the elements fitting her to be the mother of heroes, — or of heroines either, for that matter.

If she is to be placed apart from all idealism, she will have lost something for which her new liberty will be small compensation. With all the calumny and scorn which men have heaped upon women, they have yet kept her an ideal. They have treated her much as the Italian fisherman does the image of his patron saint: smacked her when in a temper, but worshipped her and looked up to her as something better than themselves all the while. Now, an ideal, even when treated roughly, is a potent thing. It assimilates the holder of it to itself, as the green leaf turns a chameleon to its own tint; and all that we do and are of the best, results from our value of that immediate jewel of our souls.

It is said that the possibilities of a race may always be tested by its attitude to its women. If its

estimate of them is low and gross, its development will never be high. And the same is true of the individual. No really admirable man, or woman either, thinks meanly of women. The welter of European savagery in the Middle Ages got its strongest impetus upward through the dreams of chivalry; and if the real women were at all as the poets and painters imagined them, their influence is very comprehensible, for they certainly were the dearest creatures!

Can one imagine the modern heroine drawing a race upward through sheer beauty of soul? No; even imagination has its limits.

II

"THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST"

THE striking feature of our altering conception of life is the gradual growth of the sense of personal responsibility. When the classic hero set out upon his enthralling adventures, his moral baggage was ordinarily so light that he could have tied it up in a handkerchief and carried it on his staff across his shoulder. The real equipment for his career was that some susceptible nymph or goddess had cast a favourable glance at his straight features, or his superb muscles, and had immediately presented him with a sword, or shield, or a Medusa's head, which gave him the most unsportsmanlike advantage over his antagonists. Or, if she had no such valuable gifts handy, whenever matters got a bit uncomfortable she rushed to the rescue in the shape of a cloud, or mist, or some natural phenomenon; and while he stood still, like a puzzled ox, the lady obligingly pulled him out of the hole he had stupidly got himself into, and he reaped all the credit to be had from the encounter. One was not a hero because of superior strength, or address, but because of having a friend among the higher powers.

The stories of Theseus, Perseus, Achilles, and

Hercules are all proofs of this, and even the later Christian knights — while more, certainly, was demanded of them — depended quite shamefully upon magic blades and shields and tarn-helms, or talismans that would to-day be barred under the strict Marquis of Queensberry rules.

Oddly enough, the first signs of self-dependence began to be visible in the picaresque romances, and even then heroic abilities were not moral or physical, but, very curiously, mental. Superior and ruthless cunning helped the hero to emerge victorious from whatever adventures befell him, moral qualities playing no part in his equipment. The placid indifference of that Iago of fairy lore, Hop-o'-my-Thumb, to the wretched fate of the giant's daughters is typical. Reineke Fuchs and Gil Blas went on their light-hearted route to good fortune, blandly insouciant of the pangs of every one stupider than themselves; as wantonly and cheerfully indifferent to the sufferings of the incompetent as either the classic or Christian knights, who had been able to achieve their successes by influence with the heavenly rulers. A sense of the importance of moral qualities in heroic personages is a modern phase of sensibility. The eighteenth-century mind began to have glimmerings of this claim of ethics, but a hero who would shed "Virtue's tear," and who had a splendid fashion of flinging his

knitted silk purse about to relieve what was known as "the pangs of penury," was felt to have done all that was required of him. A bland benevolence was his favourite pose, and the recipients of his generosity were expected to bathe his munificent fingers in grateful tears, go down on their knees and implore Heaven's choicest blessings on his priggish head, or hope for no more knitted purses or soup-tickets.

It shows how far we have travelled along virtue's thorny road when one reflects how differently our generation would receive the story of Pamela, which in its day aroused the sweetest and softest emotions. What would be thought of a twentieth-century "Mr. B.," who amorously chased his own servant-maid about through three volumes; and when at last her obdurate virtue drove him to offer her marriage, was at once elevated upon a pinnacle of adoring public admiration because he permitted the new wife to eat at the same table with him, and bestowed a small farm upon her aged and indigent parents? — One's parents had an immutable habit of age and indigence in that century, no matter how young and blooming one's self might be.

The whole attitude of the eighteenth century much resembled that of a conspicuous American, of whom Thomas Reed of Maine once said: "What I like about Theodore Roosevelt is his boyish

enthusiasm over his discovery of the Ten Commandments."

As far as research discloses, it would seem that the morally earnest young man had his true birth at Oxford about the middle of the nineteenth century, and he was generally from Balliol, and had come under the influence of its famous Master, Jowett.

The portentousness of that young man! If one would see him in all his perfection, one must read the life and letters of John Addington Symonds. Mere words are inadequate to express how seriously he took himself. Conscientiousness was his foible. Far more important than the sidereal system was his nervousness as to the correctness of every posture of his mind and soul toward the Eternal verities. And this serious young person has been the progenitor of a prolific and conscientious brood. It is amusing to think that while the modern heroine has been taking the bit in her teeth and getting her restless heels over the moral shafts, the modern hero has been growing more and more meticulously careful of his behaviour. Instead of flinging his purse about with what Cyrano de Bergerac calls "*quelle geste!*" of superb benevolence, he begins to doubt whether he has any right to own a purse at all. In his callow youth he took orders in some lay brotherhood, or went even to the length of being an out-and-out

curate, and laboriously contracted a consumption while toiling in the slums, finally dying heroically, surrounded by hysterically regretful Boys' Clubs. But even these extreme measures do not satisfy the greedy conscience of the contemporary hero. He has abandoned mere curacy as inadequate, and insists upon divesting himself of all property whatsoever; Tolstoically labouring in a sweat-shop under the most unsanitary conditions, and satisfying his desire for self-sacrifice and social regeneration by doing what a melancholy seamstress, with a bundle of unfinished male garments under her arm, once described as "light panting."

Here is a far cry indeed from Theseus, or Hop-o'-my-Thumb. Hercules span for Omphale through fatuous amorousness; but imagine Hercules setting about a readjustment of the inequalities of life by undertaking "light panting." This seriousness invades and demoralizes all our art. Such a book as Fogazarro's "Saint" was one of the best sellers, principally because it was a demonstration of the extremest overtone of conscientiousness. Of the two sorts, one finds it in one's heart to prefer Gil Blas, or Hop-o'-my-Thumb. I even prefer Achilles, or that big savage of the Saga, — Olaf, son of Howard the Halt, who, gripping his enemy in his hands, swam with him out to sea, and "lifting him up he broke Thormod's

back across his knee, after which he let him sink in the water. And," — adds the Saga ominously, — "ever after have men deemed it uncouth to sail anigh there."

An extract from a letter, written by a publisher learned in the tastes of the contemporary reading public, is enlightening as to this tendency to earnestness.

"If you really wish to write a popular book, you had better choose for your theme a question of conscience — a social question for choice. The more strained and extreme the point of view is, the better. Let your leading character set everybody by the ears with his or her moral qualms, and I think I can promise you plenty of editions. That is an even better recipe for concocting a 'seller' than exploiting the woman-question. My own opinion is that the emancipated woman is on the wane, though I don't say that money cannot yet be made out of her — provided you make her sufficiently serious in her peccadilloes. Any humorousness about them would be fatal."

The basis of this new attitude of mind reflected in our literature is the sudden overturning by scientific research of all our old fundamental beliefs. Mankind, who had been the centre of the universe, who had pictured it as created solely for his needs, who had seen the stars as finding their highest purposes in effecting his fate, or watching over the success

or failure of his bean-crop — who imagined a Deity flattered by his homage, or falling into tantrums over his disrespect — found himself suddenly called brother to the ape. He, who had only to observe a respectable code of morals to be received into eternal happiness, with all the august honours due to a condescending monarch, was brutally informed that in ethical development he was decidedly inferior to the ants and the bees. That scientific anarchist, Darwin, snatched man's crown from his head, and showed him that his existence was not nearly so necessary to the earth as was that of the humble worm which he used for fish-bait. When one has been the petted heir of all visible creation, to be suddenly cast out of one's estate and made to work for one's moral living in a fierce struggle of the fittest makes one prone to take a serious view of life. One begins meekly to reckon up one's available assets, moral and mental, and to endeavour to offer proof by one's behaviour of being fitted to survive.

J. A. Symonds, writing to George Miller, says: —

"I, for my part, feel paralyzed by the confusion round me, science and religion clashing, no creeds emergent, social conditions shifting like quicksands. In phantasmagorias of old literatures rising up to mock our modern style: the whole fabric of humanity, within and without, rocking and surging in earthquake throes. We live in *anni mirabiles*,

and the nervous fluids of our brains, instead of being concentrated on single thoughts, are dispersed through a thousand channels. There is little productive energy, much febrile excitement of interests; apparent omniscience, real blindness, and impotent drifting on all sides. I am inclined to wrap my cloak about me, to bow my head and wait, though watching from a ruined tower; to die the child of a turbid generation, with eyes clouded by the dust kicked up around me, dust of falling creeds and systems and old buildings, with ears deafened by all sorts of cries; war cries, costermonger cries, demagogic eloquence, pulpit vacuities, and innumerable other roarings of the vasty deep of void sound. If there is a future for man, these things, from the pinnacle of some immeasurable far-off star, may be coördinated — the broken light resolved into one white beam."

One must admit that, put this way, it does sound a serious situation.

There is a certain strain of healthy animalism in our Anglo-Saxon race: a cautious tendency not to go too far, a saving salt of humour and optimism that has heretofore kept us from being entirely swamped by seriousness. Even Symonds, his biographer declares, after having plumbed the depths of dejection experienced a reaction.

"He had carried speculation in the abstract, and audacious interrogation of the universe, to the utmost limits. It was inevitable that he would ultimately abandon the vacuum

of abstractions in which he was stifling, for the concrete world of man and things about him. Having boldly plunged into the abyss, having learned that, when sounded by the plummet of the human intellect, it is actually void and bottomless, the instinct of self-preservation caused him to cling to the antithesis of the void, the concrete manifestations of life. . . . The Diary he kept loses its introspective tone. Objective life, and his keen capacity for enjoying it, once more assert themselves."

Symonds himself says: —

"As for the garbage of the world, and the really good things in it, I cannot weigh them against each other. In the infinity of the universe they seem to emerge and become as one. At all events for me, who am a grain of clay upon this tiniest of little worlds, and who live for less than a moment in the short minute of its terraqueous æons, when I think of the chaos of greater universes, and the irrevocable circles of eternity, and when I remember it was but yesterday that the like of me imagined sun, moon, and stars made to give them light — I fold the wings of aspiration and of discontent, and wait in patience till the chemistry of the years resolves me into my elements."

Curiously enough, Whitman's poems first helped him to readjust his mind to cheerfulness in his disinheritance. He says: —

"I find it difficult to speak about 'The Leaves of Grass' without exaggeration. Whitman's intense emo-

tional feeling for the universe, his acute sense of the goodliness of life in all its aspects, the audacity of his mood — as of one eager to cast himself upon illimitable billows, assured whether he sank there or swam it would be well with him, confident the while that sink he could not. . . . This concrete passionate faith in the world, combined with the man's multiform experience, his human sympathy, his thrill of love and comradeship, sent a current of vitalizing magnetism through my speculations."

It was as if the shivering, disinherited outcast had been overtaken by a brawny workman going whistling to his task, perfectly contented with the meagre meal in his dinner-pail, and refusing to believe in chaos and cataclysms so long as he had muscles and a job. One can see Symonds straighten himself up and step out, ashamed to have been polysyllabically caterwauling about the loss of his heavenly mansions in the face of this other man's content with small things.

This growth and change in the moral attitude of the generations has nowhere been more subtly expressed than in Anthony Trollope's Parliamentary series. The old Duke of Omnium — a splendid, insolent nobleman — lives and dies in the lordly calm of belief in his own importance and value in the scheme of things. He could not imagine trying to prove his right to survive by the nervous,

conscientious public services of his successor and nephew, Plantagenet Palliser — Lady Glencora's poor "Planty Pal." And their son, in turn, has passed so far beyond both his father's and his great uncle's attitude as not to bother over the matter at all, since it is impossible of solution: he refuses to take himself with any seriousness whatever, and merely tries to be a decent gentleman, already being a duke by the rather absurd accident of events.

This fundamental instinct of animal wholesomeness has preserved to us a slight remnant of optimism, but the literature of the rest of the western world, being without this preservative salt, has sunk into the utterest night and blackness of moral self-consciousness. Hauptman, Ibsen, Echegaray, Tolstoi, Huysmans, in their gloomy welter of pessimism, have been urged upon us by those critics impressed with the importance of being earnest, as models beside which our own inept and romantic hopefulness should stand meekly abashed; and as a result we find ourselves nervously asking ourselves when we sit down to write, if we too really have a message? For if we have n't a message, if we make no gloomy guesses at the riddle of the universe, if we can't offer some socialistic recipe for making all the idlers and drunkards and scoundrels prosperous and happy, if we don't feel really penetrated with

the deplorableness of things in general, and with special reprobation of the vulgar tendency of the bourgeoisie to have possessions of their own, then that proves incontrovertibly that we are mere brutal, thick-headed Anglo-Saxons, with no talent for Art with a capital A. This attitude is beginning to work its will upon us. Every young man or young woman who sits down to-day to prove his or her genius, has passionately to suck his or her pencil and "show up" something: whether that capitalists are noisome vermin; or that we are each and every one of us responsible for the naughty behaviour of certain unmentionable females, who prefer their naughtiness to housework at good wages; or that we should blush to remember that poor hard-working burglars and assassins are subjected to the ennui of residence in our penitentiaries; or that pretty nearly every earthly thing we do, or don't do, is decidedly wrong, and we had n't ought to. No hero to-day — except in our very lightest literature — will consent to own a penny until all the washerwomen in the United States have had their humble human needs for 45 H. P. motor-cars supplied; and in really superior and inner heroic circles St. Francis himself would be looked upon as little better than a greedy *débauché* by contrast with the rarified exquisiteness of the modern moral attitude.

Of course, with our usual Anglo-Saxon inherent abhorrence of logic, the bearers of messages usually permit things to come out right in the end. The capitalist repents, loses all his loathsome wealth, retires to the simple life in a House Beautiful, — built after the inexpensive plans in the back of the "Lady's Home Journal," — and writes *another* book on gardening. The naughty female is entirely restored to respectability by the efficient ministrations of a dear little child, of about ten, who still talks baby-talk — and so on. No wonder the critics deal roundly with us for our inferiority to the Continental literatures, where there is no such feeble-minded letting-up in earnestness, and where the last page, or last act, is as thoroughly uncomfortable as the first.

One speaks frivolously of these things, if, like Dr. Watts's dogs who bark and bite, "it is our nature to"; but 't is a poor cold heart that would not be touched by all this earnestness in modern literature, this seriousness which has its origin in an almost pathetic eagerness to adapt itself to a new point of view, to find a moral footing in the flux of creeds, to prove that the heart of man must make for itself some religion — if not of an anthropomorphic God, then of its fellow men. If Science will take away our old celestial paradise, our subterranean hell, then we

must find an imagined subliminal heaven of virtue in our ideal man, we must picture purgatories as existing in what is known as "our midst."

Stevenson was almost the first among really modern authors to accept the situation high-heartedly; with a good courage and relish for mere living, whatever the end of living might be. To his point of view, to that vigorous savour of existence, we shall have to return if we are again to produce matter really worth while, and, perhaps, when the pendulum ceases to swing violently between the extremes of the arc, between the paralysis of pessimism and the strabismus of sentimentalism, we may rediscover the old *joie de vivre* that seems just now to have no place in our modern letters.

Life just as it is, is the important thing, not some grotesque fetish of prepossession which we set up to worship in its place. Life, no doubt, is blacker in spots than the most chlorotic pessimist can picture it, is more golden with joy and goodness than the inventor of Utopias can conceive; but it is never all of one colour. The gold and the sable flow and mingle, and weave across one another as swiftly as the undulant iris upon the surface of a blown bubble, where we no sooner say, "Here is emerald," than emerald is rose, and rose deepens to purple while we look, and is silver before we can cry that it is blue.

In places the black and aureate lie as clear-barred and contrasted as a wasp's back; but for the most part the pattern is as intricate as a Moslem arabesque, or the gold is filmed by darkness, the sable paled by the gold.

It is relish for that splendid, dazzling, daunting pattern of life that we lack: a relish that carried to passion is genius. To take some part of the pattern and retrace it for us clearly, so that we catch for an instant the play of its damascene, is to make literature.

Three thousand years ago a blind man lived in Ionia, having this supreme relish for life, and he was irresistibly impelled to tell about it — about all of it: about battle and murder and sudden death; the grind of spears on shields; the clang and whistle of swords; the harsh clamour of chariot wheels; and in the midst of it all, a baby's frightened squeal at his father's plumed helmet, and the half-anxious, half-tender smiles of the parents into each other's eyes above the downy head hidden in the mother's breast. He loved equally the flames and shrieks of a falling city, and the bashful protests of a middle-aged soldier reduced to a branch of leaves for all his costume, pleading with the embarrassed young lady overseeing the family wash. Out of this man's appetite for everything about him we have reconstructed a whole

civilization utterly passed and vanished. We know how the women lived and laboured; what they embroidered upon their household hangings, and how the men fought, and ruled, and quarrelled, and made love. He joyed in the "wine dark sea"; in the names of the ships; in the grave councils of the bearded kings. He described the adornments wrought by the armourers on the shields, with all the enthusiasm and particularity of a modern fashion-writer dwelling on a French gown. He had no special moral prepossessions, he had no message, and no lesson. He simply saw and loved life, and still, after three thousand years, we see and love life in his pages and find our morals and lessons there, each according to his predilections.

Long centuries after, a Spanish soldier whiled away the lagging hours of imprisonment by telling of life — so different, and yet so always the same. He laughs at his poor foolish Don, and loves him, and surrounds him with peasants and thieves, and asses and innkeepers, and makes us see for ourselves that wild, squalid, pompous, fantastic Iberian world of knavery and piety, of cruelty and chivalry; and we weep and laugh, and bring away lessons deeper than any the moralists can teach us in whole libraries of polemics or dogmas.

Later, an Englishman spreads a pattern of exist-

ence before our eyes, more intricate and complete than any man has done before or since. And he again has no prepossessions and no message. He dotes upon his fools and his villains quite as much as upon his heroes. His fools stumble upon wisdom; his villains have their impulses of tenderness and courage; his heroes are at moments either villains or fools. The whole warp of life he shows us plaited equally of sable and of gold. The innocent are often defeated and foully dealt with. The good are betrayed and misled into wrong. Good intentions, he makes us understand, are not sufficient to atone for unwisdom. And around and through the tragedy and comedy of life he sees the patient, unreckoning loveliness of nature. The flowers bloom, the dawn and the moon shine softly, unmoved by the pains or pleasures of men. The birds go about their merry little businesses unheedful of the life or death of kings. As the years pass, and we see each day more deeply into the stream of life, we say each day with more conviction as we read his great dramas, "It is really thus that life unfolds itself. This is as it is. The stream is too wide and deep for us to sound. We cannot tell why, or whence, or whither it flows; we can only go with it, as we must, and be glad of the sun and stars reflected upon its bosom."

It is this attitude toward life that we need to recap-

ture for our modern spirit. Stevenson perhaps came nearer to it than any one of his generation. He loved his scoundrel, Huish, as Shakespeare loved Iago. Not that either of them considered these gentlemen pleasant or pretty persons, but they rejoiced in the completeness of the specimen, in the intricate perfection of their badness, and were constantly going back and adding affectionate little touches to bring out the delicate modellings of their infamy. Stevenson too had that enormous relish of the sting of existence that is like a swimmer's relish of the bitter salt of the ocean. Kipling, I think, owes his popularity to such elements of this as he possesses, though his equipment for literature, by nature and observation, is so much paler and feebler than was that of that sickly, courageous, consumptive Scotchman.

Most of all we need to revive again the sense of nonsense; the joy of understanding, of sympathizing with, and loving, a fool; of entering into his grotesque point of view from the inside, as Rhoda Broughton can do — of whom Herbert Spencer said that she was the only woman who had added anything new to English letters since George Eliot, and whom Kipling gratefully acknowledges as one of his most inspiring models. Rhoda Broughton's female fools entitle her to a clear claim to genius, and make for her very nearly an equal place beside Jane Austen.

We need, too, to learn again the love of creation for its own sake — without purpose other than the mere joy of doing it. We need to be again enamoured of life and living; regarding with equal zest the greatness of existence and the littleness of it. We need to be just interested, as Thackeray was, who did n't much care whether a man was good or bad, but was interested anyhow — in French cooks and French viscounts; in lodging-house slaveys and marquises; in drunken Irish captains and priggish young English gentlemen; in female adventurers and pious gentlewomen such as Lady Jane Sheepshanks. All their little braggings and conceits and hypocrisies, their snobberies and makeshifts and pretences, were as great a pleasure to him as the heroisms and unselfishnesses, the courage and tendernesses, the pride and the power, the loves and loyalties. It was all life — all part of the pattern. He rejoiced in Becky Sharp as much as in Amelia Sedley, in the Marquis of Steyne as in Colonel Newcome, and could see Becky's womanliness as clearly as he could the small jealousies of Lady Castlewood, and the faults of Colonel Newcome as plainly as the virtues of that well-born blackleg, Rawdon Crawley.

Something of this — overlaid by his strange, glancing, oblique style — is the quality of George Meredith, whose high robust spirit is as buoyant as the

Psalmist's bridegroom, "who rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race" — Meredith, who is sane enough and tender enough to love his enchanting Egoist, Sir Willoughby Patterne, and really to sympathize with the follies and weaknesses of his dear Diana.

No: life is not as dark as our contemporaries would have us believe. Nor are we all weltering in blackness waiting for slum adventures to regenerate us. Ginger is still hot in the mouth, and Sir John Falstaff is a far pleasanter and more wholesome figure than these introspective, self-conscious gentlemen who are setting about redeeming humanity by toiling in the sweat-shops, and being ridiculously, tediously, and inhumanly in earnest. Even the robustiously vulgar folk of Smollett, who tumble out of one unsavoury adventure into another, are more satisfactory as literary companions along life's road to dusty death than the nebulously inane self-anatomizers and willy-nilly saviours of our degenerate human nature.

That good pleasant creature, Bernard Shaw, who undoubtedly has a sense of humour and an eye for character, has not escaped the infection. The socialist and reformer is constantly at war in him with the artist, and he solaces himself for leaving a play an artistic whole by writing prefaces to it to show how we all might be happy if we would only read Ibsen,

and abolish by law our natural instincts. Even H. G. Wells, who possesses by nature a large sense of life, cannot escape this infection of mental fashion, and breaks away from his instinctive desire for creation to advocate some particular brand of social pabulum. As for the great figures of European Continental literatures, all joy of life, all red-blooded courage, all gaiety, is absolutely taboo in their baggage. One can hope for no sweetness, no humour, no zest for living, in their masterpieces. We wander in their pages melancholily through underground lodgings, through sweat-shops and brothels; our eyes darkened by gloom, our ears deafened by plaints, our noses offended by evil smells, our hearts wrung by unrelieved anguish, shame, poverty, and frustration. One eats one's dinner remorsefully after reading them, feeling that even one's modestest meal is rightfully the property of all the woeful of the earth; one puts on one's coat bashfully, conscious of our brother's nakedness, and one lies down upon one's bed apologetically, lest others may be couching upon stones. Like Matthew Arnold's "Sick King in Bokhara," we refuse meat and drink because of sorrow at the burden of all the labouring earth.

But their report of life is not a true report. Sorrow and poverty, injustice and wrong, are not all of

existence. Much as there is of them, there is more of happiness, of beauty, of goodness, and of ruth. There is more gold in the pattern than black; and nowhere is the one divorced from the other. The sun has not ceased to shine, nor the stars to give light. Rivers run and roses bloom, and that life, in the most untoward circumstances, is worth living, is proved by the fact that men cling to it; labour and sorrow that they may cling to it; cling to it in old age, in misfortune, in pain and disease; and have always so clung, even when faith held out to them visions of Elysian fields beyond its threshold. An old woman, confined to her chair with paralysis for fourteen years, entirely deaf, and a pensioner on another's bounty, when asked if she wished to die, repudiated the suggestion indignantly, and added angrily that young people always thought they were the only ones who enjoyed life.

From the eye of these melancholy reporters of life are entirely concealed the secret wells of vitality, of amusement, of interest, that spring in every human breast, even in such as this poor old derelict; yet these fountains of obscure joys kept her contented to see it out; courageous to bear what would seem to the more fortunate intolerable ills.

It is a sense of all this that our modern literature lacks. A sense that life, just mere life, in all its

manifestations, in its humblest, sorrowfulest forms, is interesting; humorous through its contrasts, and on the whole enjoyable. Like Stevenson's child, we need to think that

> "The world is so full of a number of things
> I am sure we should all be as happy as kings."

III

COMMON OR GARDEN BOOKS

WHEN one begins to look — in each special manifestation of our contemporary literature — for the underlying causes of the manifestation, below certain surface-reasons, such as fashion, or the possession of new liberties, and the like, there seems everywhere to be, as the fundamental cause of these tendencies, a new conception of his own place in nature, forced upon man by the discoveries of Science.

Robbed of the sense of his unique importance and value, of his dominating place in the scheme of the universe; forced to admit that the sun does not shine solely to give him warmth and light, that animate life was not brought into being only to feed and nurture his orgulous existence, he begins, like the guest at the scriptural banquet, to "take with shame a lower place," and to look about him with dawning interest at his fellows at the feast. Heretofore, wrapped in the thick vesture of his conviction that he was the only invited guest at nature's table, that all that swarming life surrounding him

had importance only as his food or as his servants, convinced that he alone was destined to immortality, and therefore alone a matter of interest, he had never turned his mind to serious study of his environment. But a profound readjustment has been taking place, jarring us out of our smug self-satisfaction, forcing upon us a new humility. Not alone have we been reluctantly obliged to admit our humble and doubtful pedigree, but — studying our fellow creatures — we have been brought to see that our gifts are not so supereminent as we had heretofore supposed, nor our importance in the scheme of life so all-pervading as we fondly imagined. The ants and bees we find have perfected a social polity beside which our highest social achievements are but heterogeneous and confused. The albatross, the porpoise, and the wild goose make our most splendid endeavours at speed in locomotion but halt and feeble. The wasps and the spiders, the molluscs and diatoms, outdo our most skilful manufactures, and in grace, strength, speed, skill, we have to acknowledge a thousand rivals and superiors among those whom we used contemptuously to class as the lower orders of life.

Out of this new humility, this new knowledge, has grown up a new literature. No longer do the sentimental adventures of imaginary Clarences and

Matildas absorb all our efforts and all our pens. We have begun earnestly to record the love-affairs of wolves and dogs, of bees, and of carnations. Stevenson wrote one of the most penetrating and brilliant of his essays, "The Character of Dogs," to show us their chivalry, their vanity, their strange stringent code of etiquette, their ambitions, their religion, their weaknesses, and their heroism. Maeterlinck has sublimated still further in "The Intelligence of the Flowers," and we hang breathlessly upon the record of the courage, the ingenuities, the passionate strivings, of these silent lovers of the fields, of the pools, and of the gardens,—lovers beside whose ardour and amorous persistency the rope-ladders and Gretna elopements of the past are but clumsy and indifferent contrivances. To die for the beloved is, in their existence, no figure of speech; in their world they are all of the tribe of Azra, "who when they love they perish."

And not only has the Belgian shown us loves more passionate, more romantic, and more uncalculating than those of Romeo and Juliet, of Anthony and Cleopatra, of Pyramus and Thisbe, but he has revealed to us maternal affections and self-sacrifices even more instinctive than ours. A thousand ingenious adaptations and mechanical devices have been perfected by these humble parents to ensure the

happiness and survival of their offspring. To yield up their own existence, that their children may live, is the simplest of their expedients. Little water-mothers deliberately drown themselves that their seeds may be buried safely in their native slime beyond the reach of devouring enemies. Others wing their babies to float away on silver fibres to places of safety and success. Some have perfected ingenious springs to toss the children beyond the heavy shade of the parent's foliage, thereby ensuring them the necessary warmth and sunshine.

In a book recently published, containing the results of an East Indian student's years of patient study of the life and nature of trees, are the most astonishing revelations of the complicated processes taking place behind those barky exteriors, which heretofore we have crudely considered as being merely the outer surface of a device to furnish material for our chairs and tables. So surprising are the results of this Hindu's patient investigations, that he concludes a tree to be "a sentient creature living in a box." A creature, he tells us, who is, in the old sentimental phrase, "all heart." It had long puzzled hydraulic engineers to understand how trees succeeded in pumping the fluid of their sap from the soil to heights which no steam-pump of our invention could reach; but the Hindu explains that the

tree is an immense, elongated heart, with a systole and diastole like that of the human muscle; and that in many other ways a tree's growth and circulation curiously resemble those of man. Skilled surgery has been applied to their wounds, a whole pharmacopœia of preventive medicine for their diseases has been classified by the national agricultural chemists, and their wasting from anæmia or senescent decay has been checked by liberal doses of cod-liver oil, to which stimulus they respond much as we would ourselves.

Discoveries of this character, recognition of our likeness to, our close physical, mental, and moral ties with, not only animate, but what used to be called inanimate, nature, have had their inevitable influence upon our literature. We of this generation have a most refreshing and exhilarating sense of being Columbuses of this new world, which has lain so near and yet so far from us for so long; but, as has been cynically suggested of discoveries in philosophy, "If you have an entirely new and original thought, go and look it up in the Greek classics—you'll find it admirably expressed in some one of them"; so, to find expressed this sense of oneness with all forms of life, we have only to turn over the pages of an Hellenic mythology. The Greeks, of course, gave it a different form of expression. Where

we use facts, and diagrams, and scientific terms, they used an image, a poetic suggestion, conveying the same idea in another form. Where we use thermometers so delicate that it is said a cross word or hasty movement will register a change of temperature on the dial, or where we employ measurements so minute as to make millimeters seem as long as miles, the Greek cast his conception in the form of anthropometric suggestion. His myth of the tender palpitating flesh and soul of the dryad enclosed in the rough skin of the tree, merely conveys in simpler, more picturesque form the meaning we work out through laborious scientific experiments. His was a sort of picture-writing of thought — the same thought we now convey through the arbitrary formulæ of science and demonstrations by diagrams.

In its simplest and mildest form this new impulse of ours toward the life about us has taken the shape of garden-books. No really self-respecting author now fails to number among his works some form of this pervasive literature. We have Commuters' gardens and German gardens, Tuscan gardens and Potpourris from a Surrey garden, formal gardens and rose-gardens, water-gardens and wild gardens, hardy gardens and winter-gardens; and, if we are not all past masters at growing everything, from tulips to lilies, from cabbages to kings, it is no fault of the

busy creators of recipes for developing new Edens. We all passionately build pergolas, or search ardently for sun-dials; we all have views on bulbs, or prepossessions about manures. Not to own a trowel or a picturesque garden-hat is to be as *démodé* as if one clung to last year's styles in sleeves.

Hot on the trail of the garden-book comes the literature of the reformed cockney — that ingenuous wanderer from "the sweet shady side of Pall Mall," who, book and opera-glass in hand, wrestles prayerfully with the mysteries of "Familiar Trees and their Leaves," or meekly sets about learning "How to know the Birds from the Wild Flowers." Ready-witted seizers of crazes get five dollars an hour from earnest ladies gathering themselves into classes to be taken to the woods to hear the hermit thrush, and who are perfectly content with a robin's whistle. Meanwhile no governess can hope for a place who does not include "Nature-Studies" in her curriculum, or who is not prepared to teach the infant mind to distinguish readily between the crow and the crocus, between parrots and carrots.

And hard on the heels of these purveyors of Twelve Easy Lessons on How to Use your Eyes and Intelligence are the makers of the literature of the wild; and any lack of familiarity with the inmost emotions of our brother animals is not for want of revelations

of the *vie intime* of bears and wolves, sheep and deer, cats and dogs. The habits and laws, hopes and sorrows, of our dumb brothers are slowly disentangled and revealed to us, and we find with each page we turn how slight is the barrier dividing us from lives heretofore apparently separated from our own by unbridged abysses.

Not without protest, however, has this change taken place. A remnant yield but slowly to this frontal attack upon human egotism. There are still many who like to think condescendingly and half contemptuously of the dog as having his best claim to existence in being what used to be sentimentally termed the Friend of Man. There are still many who passionately oppose all suggestion of animal personality and intelligence by vociferously classing all such proofs as cannot be denied or ignored with "instinct," though what this mysterious instinct is, they cannot be induced to define. Apparently it is some mental process which animals apply to their needs in the same way in which human animals apply their intelligence; but it is human *lèse majesté* that this instinct, which works so exactly like a mind, should be recognized as mind.

We have all progressed beyond Descartes' strange fancy that animals were mere automata, experiencing no mental processes whatever; but it affronts these

crusted old Tories to be told that they have no exclusive claim to gifts of mind and of personality; their cry of outrage taking the form of loud denials of assertions tending to reverse their convictions, and of sweeping all their opponents into the scorned category of nature-fakirs. It should not be a surprise to find amid this forlorn hope of the human egotists some who claim the title of naturalists. A naturalist in the past has been one who, armed with lethal weapons, went forth in search of his fellow creatures' lives, and who found his pleasure in the measurements and studies of the dead bodies of his victims. To know the exact number of a dead warbler's tail-feathers, to give accurately the measure of a bob-cat's skull, was sufficient in the past to rank one as a nature-lover. One might as properly call a student of human anatomy a philanthropist. To accept the views of the man who seeks animals only with a gun in his hand, would seem about as intelligent as to pin one's faith to the opinion of a Japanese soldier upon the home life of the Russian moujik. The moujik pitting his cunning and the swiftness of his legs against the searching fire of the machine-gun is a very different person from the Russian peasant making love, marrying, rearing his children in the security of his village *mir*. To the hunter all animals seem wild beasts, — cunning, treacherous, fierce, and stupid, —

and hunters of men would probably bring us back a like report of the human race. If one could imagine that remarkable story by H. G. Wells, "The War of the Worlds," having been an actual occurrence, one could imagine what sort of a report the Martians must have taken back to Mars of the treachery, fierceness, and lack of reasoning faculty displayed by the inhabitants of London when pursued by weapons so deadly and so unusual as those employed in the interplanetary struggle.

Apart from this limitation of the point of view, those who denounce students of the wild as nature-fakirs make no allowance for the difference between individuals in the animal world. Of course these deny that such differences exist, but the same type of mind would not admit possible differences in the characters of Frenchmen, Negroes, and Chinamen. Such a mind lumps the whole race into a mere undifferentiated mass of "dagoes," "coons," and "chinks"; and the possibility of the individual displaying any variation from the preconceived type of chink, coon, or dago would be scornfully repudiated as the mendacious romancing of human nature-fakirs. A mind of this calibre asserts that wolves do thus and so — wolves never do thus and so. One might as well say Joneses do thus and so — Joneses never do thus and so; when nothing is more certain

than that children born of the same parents, bred in the same environment, differ as widely as human beings can. One Jones may be a scientist, another a mystic. A Jones may be an eminent financier, his twin brother a ne'er-do-weel and a wastrel. Meeting the banker Jones, one might as properly say that all Joneses have the money sense; or the next student of Joneses declare, studying the brother, that all Joneses are idle spendthrifts; and each observer would probably call the other an unintelligent liar. Now wolves differ as greatly as do Joneses, and much depends on which wolf one has met.

How, after all, are we to pass these sweeping judgements upon our fellow animals when we understand so little our fellow men? For we speak in the same broad way of nations of human beings. The French are polite, the Italians romantic, the English haughty and inhospitable. Even so close at home as between North and South, East and West, there are the same rough judgements. The North thinks the South lazy, shiftless, and ignorant; and a Northerner listens with incredulity to denials, or even proofs, of the contrary. The South is firmly convinced that the special characteristics of the North are grinding, greedy meannesses, and cold-blooded hypocrisies. The East thinks the West

coarse, sensual, and violent; the West returns the compliment by charges of cowardly effeteness.

Here we are in a common country, under one government, speaking one language, with one literature, laced together in the closest communion by common interests, and yet we so little understand and sympathize with our human neighbours. I have heard a New York woman, of rather unusual education and breeding, express naïve and profound surprise at finding the house of a Western millionaire exquisitely and artistically appointed; and the average Westerner is amazed to find that an Eastern man can sit a horse or fire a gun. Even travel cannot open eyes closed by prejudice. Indeed, it probably only intensifies the misinterpretation, for the eyes cannot see what the brain is not prepared to receive. One who has a fixed preconception will notice only such matters as fit the preconception.

A geologist, a naturalist, and a sailor went for a ride by a wooded road that overlooked the sea. They discussed a political question all the way, but on their return their hostess conceived the idea of making them each write for her a brief account of the expedition. The geologist had been most interested in a curious formation of the soil shown in a deep cutting made to grade the road. The sailor had observed several unusual types of boats; and

both of these stared rather doubtingly at the naturalist when he reported the presence of six scarlet tanagers within a few acres of forest. No one of the three had seen what the others had seen, and yet all were trained observers. Each had found what the bent of his mind had led him to look for, and entirely missed important facts that were outside the scope of his interest, — for, as I said before, it is impossible to see what one has not the type of brain to receive. And apparently there is nothing so tempting as to affirm that what one has not seen cannot possibly exist.

It is not necessary, however, to linger to point out the limitations of these vociferous apostles of negation. We may pass onward to those who have given us a definite and tangible impulse toward a larger comprehension of the world in which we live; those who have touched our blinded eyes and said, "Ephatha!" — be thou opened, — and led us by the hand back to "Nature, the dear old nurse," and introduced us to our myriad playfellows who stand ready to teach us a thousand lessons, to show us endless treasures.

Perhaps the most famous of these apostles to the Gentiles is Ernest Seton, that Shakespeare of the woods, with his gift of characterization, of gathering up the qualities of a species into an archetype, so

that we see the wolf in Lobo; the crow, that odd, wily, cynical old philosopher of the air, in Silverspot; the deer in the Sand-hill Stag; much as we have grown to think of human ambition as Macbeth, of jealousy as Othello, of avarice as Shylock the Jew. And not alone has he made us privy to the world of the wild, but in what is perhaps his subtlest and most symbolic study of that animal cockney, the "Slum Cat," he has taught us to understand how curiously alike are the influences of urban environment upon beasts and upon man. No one can rise from his story of Arnaux, the carrier dove, that Bayard of the sky, without knowing that "purification of the emotions by pity and terror," which Plato thought the real value of tragedy upon the stage. Of course, there is a certain type of stodgy mind which will demand inquisitorially, "But is the story of Arnaux true?" One might as well ask is the story of Desdemona true, though Mr. Seton says, "It is so nearly historical that several who knew the bird have supplied additional items of information."

As Charles G. D. Roberts, another notable teller of nature tales, says: —

"It is with the psychology of animal life that the representative animal stories of to-day are first of all concerned. . . . Looking deep into the eyes of our four-footed kindred, we have been startled therein by some things before

unrecognized, that answered to our inner intellectual, if not spiritual selves. . . . Our chief writers of animal stories of the present day may be regarded as explorers of this unknown world, absorbed in charting its topography. . . . Above all, they are diligent in their search for the motive beneath the action. Their care is to catch the varying, elusive personalities which dwell back of the luminous brain-windows of the dog, the horse, the deer, or wrap themselves in reserve behind the inscrutable eyes of all the cats, or sit aloof in the gaze of the hawk and the eagle. The animal story at its highest point of development is a psychological romance constructed on a framework of natural science."

This framework of natural science, this charting of topography, is in the hands of a thousand busy workers and observers, who, perhaps not sufficiently imaginative to write psychological romances, yet with note-book and camera collect the material from which the romances are constructed, and open up endless vistas into the life about us. They show us the flaming, meteoric love-making of the bee and of the hummingbird. (One wonders, by the way, if the old term of "honey-moon" was not in acknowledgement of some secret aphrodisaic quality in the essence of the flowers, since both these creatures whose food it is are such passionate, unreflecting Romeos in their amours); or they open to our view the life history of

the salmon — one of the strangest tales in nature; or they are studying the thrifty housekeeping of the wayside herbs, or taking notes on the educational system of the hare and the rabbit. Nothing is too large to be interesting, nothing so small as to be unimportant. Though you take the winds of the morning and fly to the uttermost parts of the earth, you will not escape the student of nature. You will meet him with specimen-box and butterfly-net in the forests of Papua, and find him struggling with refractory photograph-films in Terra del Fuego. No modesty on the part of an individual will avail in evading his notice. Talk about the intrusions of the American newspapers! They are shrinking delicacy itself when compared to the egregious intrusiveness of the nature-student. Consider the case of Melicerta, for example. No one can say she courts notoriety, and yet P. H. Gosse has dragged all her household secrets before the public in his book, "The Romance of Natural History."

Melicerta lives, and always has lived, in the most retiring manner in stagnant ditches, and so little ostentatious is she that one drop of water gives her ample room for all her activities, and you never see her unless you take the base advantage of using a powerful microscope. Gosse, the peeper, says: —

"The smallest point made with the finest steel pen would be too large to represent its dimensions, yet she lives in a snug little house of her own construction, which she has built up stone by stone, cementing each with perfect symmetry as it proceeded with all the skill of an accomplished mason. She collects the material for the mortar, and mingles it. She collects the material for the bricks and moulds them, and this with a precision only equalled by the skill with which she lays them when they are made. As might be supposed, with such duties to perform, Melicerta is furnished with an apparatus quite unique, a set of machinery to which, if we searched through the whole range of beasts, birds, reptiles, and fishes, and examined the 500,000 species of insects to boot, we should find no parallel."

To shorten the elaborate description of this remarkable apparatus, it is enough to say that Melicerta turns her head into what looks like a pellucid pansy, and makes the waving edges of the pansy gather the silica in the water into a little pouch on her chin, and in that pouch moulds her brick, and she can make and lay a brick every three minutes. And yet we praise the energy and skill of the American artisan! Can any one of them mould a brick on his chin every three minutes?

Mr. Burroughs denies that animals have what can be called mind in our sense of the term, but Gosse says: —

"It is impossible to witness the constructive operations of Melicerta without being convinced that she possesses mental faculties. . . . How can we fail to see that in the operations of this invisible animalcule there are workings of an immaterial principle? There must be a power to judge of the height to which its structure must be carried, a will to commence and to go on, a will to leave off, a consciousness of when the little brick is in a proper condition for laying, an accurate estimate of the spot where it needs to be deposited, a memory of where the last one was laid. Surely these are mental powers. Yet this mind animates an atom so small that under the most favourable circumstances it is only barely visible to the eye unassisted by a microscope."

It is, after all, largely to the microscope that we owe the gradual breaking down of our fat-witted human egotism. It seems odd that the proper grinding and juxtaposition of pieces of glass should not only produce a highly salutary moral effect, but make whole new worlds swim into our ken. One of the new nature-books calls to our attention the startling thought that there exists a world of animated beings densely peopling the elements around us, of which our senses are altogether uncognizant. Generation after generation of infusoria and protozoa have been living and dying under the very eyes and in the very hands of man, and until he invented a micro-

scope, he no more suspected their existence than if "the scene of their sorrow" had been in the rings of Saturn.

Read the description one writer has given of a drop of water that clung to the root of a lily pulled up from a pool. Here is a mere paragraph out of the six pages: —

"The amount of life is at first bewildering as one studies it under the microscope. Motion is in every part of the field — hundreds and thousands of pellucid bodies are darting about. . . . Aggregations of little transparent pears clinging together by their stalks go revolving merrily. Here comes rolling by, with majestic slowness, a globe of glass with sixteen emeralds embedded in its substance, each emerald carrying a tiny ruby at one end. Elegant forms resembling fishes or battledores, or poplar leaves, all of a rich opaque green hue with a large orange spot, wriggle by in corkscrew fashion. Disks of clear jelly are seen. A great oblong purplish mass comes rolling along, a very Triton among the minnows. He suddenly arrests his headlong course, takes hold of a fragment of leaf, and unfolds into a trumpet, in shape like a calla lily. A tuft of needle-like leaves is full of life. The branches bear transparent wine-glasses. Several tiny creatures are climbing among these branches, shaped like guinea pigs, but with a large ruby-coloured eye shining in the middle of their foreheads."

And he concludes: —

"Truly this world which we could hold between finger and thumb, — this world in a globule of water, — this world of rollicking, joyous, boisterous fellows, that a pin's point would take up, is even more wonderful than the shoals of whales that wallow in Baffin's Bay, or the herds of elephants that shake the earth in the forests of Ceylon."

Perhaps the most charming of all the writers of the literature of out-of-doors is that modest Anglo-Indian author of "The Tribes On My Frontier," who contents himself by signing his delightful studies of the Hindu world simply with the initials E. H. A. He is not only a naturalist but a humourist, and in the clear genial light of his gay spirit are disclosed a thousand pathetic and amusing aspects of the birds, the insects, and the animals of the tropical world about him. If Ernest Seton is the Shakespeare of the woods, E. H. A. is the Molière of the jungle. He sees with the kindliest, laughing eye all the foibles and absurdities of his neighbours out-of-doors; and his delicious stories of the ants, the rats, the crows, the spiders, and centipedes give one a new sense of the nearness of these creatures, so like ourselves in their small shifts, their jealousies, their stupidities and greed, their tricks and jests, and their narrow ambitions.

Summing up his observations he says: —

" I will not moralize on all these things, for this reason, that a moral is more palatable and more wholesome when you extract it for yourself. Served up cold by another, it is apt to bring on nausea. Materials are plentiful for those who will use them. Like a thousand fragments of a shattered mirror, the bright flies and other ephemeral fowls of the air, the caterpillars, worms, and creeping things on the earth, and the strange shapes that people every piece of water, are reflecting this same life of ours, with all its lights and shades. Its joys and sorrows light upon them, its hopes and cares distract their hearts.

" One evening I dined with a major, who had a quiverfull of anxieties at home, and he showed me a long row of their photographs in his pocket-album; another evening I met a small beetle travailously rolling along a round ball of nutritious earthy matter, in which she proposed to bring up her family. The simplest way of managing the matter which suggested itself to her original mind was to stand on her head and kick the ball along with her hind feet; and at this exercise I found her panting and perspiring. At length she reached a pit which she had dug beforehand, and there she proceeded to bury the ball and cover it with earth, — the major meanwhile turning over in his thoughts the relative advantages of the Army and the Civil Service as a sphere for his first-born, and wondering whether possibly the Church would suit his second boy. Of course, the major does not care a straw what becomes of the dirty little beetle and its vile grub; on the other hand, it is a matter of the profoundest indifference to the beetle whether

the major's son runs away with an actress or becomes Archbishop of Canterbury. She has her own springs of gladness and sadness, and with these a stranger intermeddleth not."

It is to some such conclusion as this that the whole creation of the modern literature of out-of-doors moves: toward a comprehension of the unity of life; toward a sympathy and understanding of the myriad lives around us, which like our own are tossed about, on tempests of misdirected affections and ambitions, on illusive hopes and fears; a realization that they like ourselves hope and rejoice, sigh and suffer, toil in anxiety and rest with satisfaction. However the squad of egotists contemptuously rage and imagine a vain thing of our enormous superiority, the patient work and study of the real students of nature opens wider day by day the closed doors between us and our fellow beings, and teaches us the humility which makes us acknowledge the snobbishness of our past attitude to those whom we were wont to consider our poor relations.

This enlarging of our moral and mental horizons is almost comparable to the immense expansion in the intellectual development of Europe which followed upon the discovery of America. Nothing gave mediæval superstition and bigotry so shrewd a blow as the opening up of this immense new continent

for adventure and exploration; and Darwin's investigation into our human pedigree, and his announcement of our really humble origin, opened up a like continent of mental adventure to ourselves. Into this new world the brave and the vigorous have thrown themselves with a passion like that of the old colonists and *conquistadores*. The accounts they bring back of the natives of these fresh fields and pastures new differ as widely as the early accounts of the natives of America. Some are passionate defenders and philanthropists, like the tender-hearted Bishop of the Isles, Las Casas; others, romantic sentimentalists, like Chateaubriand, or careful gatherers of general fact, like the compilers of the famous "Relations" of the Jesuit Fathers; but each and all add something to the growing store of our knowledge of the "natives" of the world about us,—are slowly making us aware of their habits, laws, customs, costumes, ceremonies, and structures, are teaching us their languages, their religions, and their resemblances to ourselves.

What the result of all this new knowledge, this new adventure, will eventually be upon the mind and the soul of man, it is yet too early to discern; but the results will probably be as far-reaching, as unexpected, as has been the reaction of the Western continent upon the Eastern. Those who go forth

with the early settlers will feel the influence first, will experience the greatest changes. Wordsworth, with a poet's prophetic insight into impulses of the future, cries to his fellows,—

> "Come forth into the light of things,
> Let Nature be your teacher.
> . . . . . .
> "One impulse from a vernal wood
> May teach you more of man,
> Of moral evil and of good,
> Than all the sages can.
> . . . . . .
> "Enough of Science and of Art;
> Close up those barren leaves;
> Come forth, and bring with you a heart
> That watches and receives."

There is the talisman we must take if we would find gold in this new world. We must cease to be human snobs and egoists, and bring with us "a heart that watches and receives."

IV

THE CHILD IN LITERATURE

CONSIDERING, from various angles, the effect upon modern literature of the new human humility which has resulted from the discoveries of science, we have seen how it has altered the mutual attitude of the sexes, what a revolution it has wrought in the sense of social responsibility, how it has bridged the gulf which we had dug between ourselves and nature; and it is interesting to consider what a change it has brought about in our attitude to our children.

I consider myself peculiarly well fitted to speak on this topic, having — though apparently still in the prime of a hale middle age — really lived in three centuries. For in the remote parts of the South, in the '60's, the attitude of the family and of society still strikingly resembled that of England in the eighteenth century under the Georges, and having had intimate acquaintance with the latter third of the nineteenth century, I am now permitted to see the dawn of the twentieth epoch of the Christian era. So that, when Max Beerbohm, in the

chapter named "A Cloud of Pinafores," speaks of the "stern Georgian and early Victorian days when nurseries were governed in a spirit of blind despotism," I know from personal experience what he means to signify. He says: "Children were not then recognized as human creatures. They were a race apart: savages to be driven from the gates; beasts to be kept in cages; devils to whose voices one must not listen. Indeed, the very nature of children was held to be sinful. Lies and sloth, untidiness and irreverence, and a tendency to steal black-currant jam, were taken to be its chief constituents. And so all nurseries were the darkened scene of temporal oppression, fitfully lighted with the gaunt reflections of hell fire. . . . Children were not neglected in those days. Their parents' sedulous endeavour was to force them up to a standard of mature conduct. They were taught that only their elders were good, and they were punished always in so far as they behaved childishly."

This picture is not drawn in exaggerated lines. Max Beerbohm has a light-minded fashion of saying the most incisive things. It was perfectly true that we of the dark infantile ages were brought up on the theory that only our elders were virtuous, and one never thought of criticizing them. Whatever they did, was, it was explained, "for our good,"

and even the most unsparing floggings, we were assured, were administered in a spirit of loving-kindness, and hurt our parents far more than they did us. Now no mind could fail, under such an assurance, to be dazzled by the lofty self-sacrifice of those so ready and so frequent to endure this excess of torture in the behalf of another's moral elevation. Their whole attitude toward us rested, we were told, impregnably upon a scriptural basis. Did we not have the unimpeachable testimony of that learned old rake, King Solomon, as to sparing the rod and spoiling the child? and was there not a grim hint in the minor Prophets about the Eagles of the Valley picking out the eyes of the irreverent infant? Also, how about that story of Elisha and the bears? — And now, perhaps, you will be good!

I hope it will inspire a properly reverent attitude for the hoariness of my experiences when it is understood that "Sanford and Merton" was the earliest of my juvenile books, and that they and their little darkey, whom they called "a blackamoor," stood for me at the gateway of English literature. Also I possessed an "Orbis Pictus," which has the honour of being almost the first book ever written for children. My moral nature was formed upon the high, austere lines laid down by Hannah More and Ma-

ria Edgeworth. "Line upon Line" and "Precept upon Precept" were two of the specimens of light literature which beguiled one's leisure hours in those days. Dr. Watts scattered his flowers of didactic hymnology along one's severely straight and narrow path. He told us how —

> "Birds in their little nests agree,
> And 't is a sorry sight
> When children of one family
> Fall out, and chide and fight;" —

and we accepted the moral instruction without question, though our observation had taught us that there was as much scrooging and pushing, and struggle for the biggest piece, in the nest as in the nursery.

Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" and "Holy War" were administered as correctives to a tendency to light-mindedness; and a concession to a lamentable modern disposition to indulge the young was a permission to read Grace Aguilar's "Vale of Cedars" and "A Mother's Recompense," though the child of to-day would look upon them as little better than tracts.

Of course, one was expected to "search the Scriptures" as diligently as did the young Timothy. A chapter from each Testament both morning and evening was stipulated. It is vivid yet how one

shivered on winter nights over long genealogical lists of how somebody begat somebody else, hurrying through them by a flickering candle in an unwarmed bedroom, one's eyelids drooping irresistibly, and even the icy linen sheets looking inviting by contrast. On Sundays secular reading of any nature whatsoever was forbidden. The memorizing of hymns, psalms, and selected Biblical chapters followed the recitation of the Collect for the day, and the Church Catechism, in which any failure in letter perfection entailed condign punishment. As a reward for fluency one was read aloud to from "Stepping Heavenward," or from a really frightful little allegory called "The Shadow of the Cross," whose poignant pictures of the fate inevitable for naughtiness produced a solution into floods of uncontrollable anguish.

The whole tendency of literature for the young in that day confirms Max Beerbohm's assertions. Constant repetition engraved deep upon one's consciousness the belief that children were by nature reprehensible, with a tendency to be incorrigible, and that their elders were by contrast equally impeccable. One was called upon to distrust all one's native instincts, and to accept without criticism all the actions of the grown-ups, however these actions might superficially appear not to square with their

precepts. It seems well nigh incredible that one ordinary lifetime, of no inordinate length, has sufficed for so complete a revolution in our moral attitude. When one considers the change brought about in some two-score years one murmurs, —

> "Can such things be?
> And overcome us like a summer cloud" —

of pinafores.

The first gleam along my particular horizon came in the shape of the Leila books; three fat red volumes of the adventures of a little English girl, who, of course, possessed the usual supply of wholly admirable adult relations, but who had human elements herself, though in what would be considered to-day a highly diluted form. The famous Elsie Dinsmore, as I remember her, was the first infant of literature to deal roundly with the parent. But the *émeute* of that unwholesome, detestable little prig rested upon a strictly religious basis. When Mr. Horace Dinsmore (who in the illustrations was depicted with limbs clothed in fashionable peg-top trousers, and a worldly countenance adorned with flowing "Piccadilly weepers") bade Elsie give them a little music on the holy Sabbath day, she fainted from the piano-stool rather than obey so monstrous a command. Which virtuous constancy had the effect of touching her father to a prompt conversion, — trousers, Piccadilly weepers,

and all, — and immediately imbued him with extreme High-Church principles. But the wedge had at last been inserted, even though pointed with an edge of piety. The reign of the immaculate adult was at an end.

The first realist among the writers for children was Sophie May — author of the "Dotty Dimple" series. I earned the money to buy the Dotty books by refraining from the use of butter for three months — not that the butter habit was reprehensible, or that the supply was short, but merely to teach one self-discipline. And well those volumes repaid self-denial. Here at last were children such as one knew one's self to be — a normal mingling of good and evil, of kind-heartedness and snobbery, of truth and falsehood, of fantasy and practical wisdom. The books might have been written by a child herself, so veracious, so simple, and so mirror-like in accuracy were those little volumes.

Alas! tempted by the publisher, the author was unwise enough to use their popularity to exploit other series; series no more like to the Dotty books than I to Hercules. Elsie, too, was followed by an endless series of other Elsies. I am told that the child of the present day is now reading the adventures of the original Elsie's great-grandchildren, and that the publisher of Martha Finley's works declares that if

he had no other volumes in his catalogues than these, he could still enjoy a sufficient income.

To-day the child reigns supreme in literature. Not only have they periodicals devoted wholly to their interests, but no periodical for adults dares appear without at least one story of infantile life. The greatest authors and artists vie for the privilege of describing and depicting the humours and sorrows of the child. The ancient proverb now reads, "Grown-ups should be seen but not heard," and in this fierce light that beats upon the infant all the traditional simplicity and charm of youth has withered. Compare our old friend Rollo with Buster Brown or Peck's Bad Boy, and one will realize how far we have travelled in half a century. The voice of the child is so clamant as to drown all other sounds. We have "The Child in the House," the "Child's Garden of Verses," "The Rights of the Child," "The Psychology of the Child," until some of us begin secretly to develop a sneaking fondness for Herod, and to consider that there might be mitigating circumstances in, not a new slaughter of the Innocents, — for there are none, — but perhaps some form of bloodless massacre of the Sophisticated. It is perhaps not so much selfishness as a stern desire to survive at all which is showing itself in the tendency to race-suicide. The oppressed adult is being driven into a sinister rebel-

lion by the intolerable oppression of his offspring. The pendulum has swung to the extreme opposite point of the arc, and the twentieth century's sentimentalism has taken the form of the complete abdication of the erstwhile despotic grown folks. Every era has its particular phase of sentimentality, and this infantile sentimentality is ours. You have but to mention the "Che-ild," — with the *vox humana* lilt turned on, — and we at once assume just that moist brightness of the eye, that wistful, tender "mother-smile," which is correct of the occasion. The skilful makers of literature have been quick to seize upon this sentimentality, and the opportunity has been grasped not only by writers of the female persuasion, but even by those who, like the Indian braves of Eugene Field's poem, —

> never have been mothers
> And can never hope to be,

owing to the pathetic limitations of their sex, and have exploited the enormous popularity of the child, and turned it to gold. One author who had sought vainly for a hearing until reaching middle age, in a moment of inspiration concocted a drippingly sentimental book about a baby, and at once found fame and money, and the sternly barred pages of the magazines opened hospitably wide to his hitherto rejected addresses.

Some admirable books we have had, too — amid much sentimental saccharinity. "Emmy-Lou" was a creation of real worth. So was Myra Kelly's "Little Citizens." But the list, to which there might be a few more additions, is not a long one; for despite our new attitude of respect and humility toward the child, in the aspect we still turn toward him we are guilty of reasoning from a false premise. We still make the mistake of regarding children as "something afar from the scene of our sorrow." We treat them, speak of them, write of them, as fundamentally unlike ourselves. They are no longer looked upon as savages with a fixed predisposition toward the theft of black-currant jam, but we have not yet realized the full significance of the saying that the child is the father of the man. We shall not be wholly at one with him until we grasp the fact that the child's mind, the child's nature, is a counterpart of our own, the sole difference between us consisting not in his immaturity, but in his lack of experience; and in the fact that he is moving about in a world unrealized. He acts and reasons much as we might do ourselves if suddenly translated to the planet Mars, where the language, the landscape, even the exigencies of gravitation, would present wholly new problems with which our experience did not fit us to deal. The mistakes made by the

early explorers of the American continent astonishingly resembled the absurdities of a baby toddling about the garden for the first time. We find the child's credulity for wonder-tales amusing, but our own appetite for miraculous happenings is still unsatiated. We are condescendingly protective in soothing his fear of the mysteries of the dark, or of the terrifying reverberations of the thunder, but only very recent knowledge has enabled us to meet their menace with a quiet pulse.

Indeed, it is but just now that we adults have learned our way about this great dwelling we inhabit, only recently we dare set forth upon its seas, explore its distant lands, or meet its dangers with an unterrified mind. There is not one limitation of the child that we have not ourselves laboriously overcome in the long, slow, toilsome path of civilization.

In the moral world his attitude is painfully like our own. He meets violence with violence, if he is courageous and sturdy ; if timid and self-distrustful, he resorts to evasion and deceit; and all history is a record of our choice between these two courses, according as we are strong or weak. The ethics of the nursery are an epitome of the history of morals displayed in a narrow field.

The child's mind, too, is perfectly logical, and ap-

parently mature in its faculties. As far as his experience goes, he generally acts with wisdom and discretion. He does not have to be burned more than once to dread the fire. That he does not invariably tread the path of wisdom, that he does not, even after several experiences, abjure all harmful things, only demonstrates more vividly his likeness to ourselves. He may see his elders after three-score years still indulging appetites proved a thousand times to be injurious. His mental capacity is as good, if not in many respects better, than that of the children of a larger growth. A child masters two, or even three languages, with an ease which few older persons can hope to imitate. In games of physical skill they are easily our masters in facility. The tradition in Scotland runs to the effect that the game of golf is never perfectly mastered if one waits to begin it beyond one's seventh year.

In the arts, children possess a ready-made capacity. Mozart is not the only musician who had mastered the piano almost as soon as he could reach the keyboard. Very nearly all the great makers of music have shown what is called precocity, — as have the painters in using brush and pencil, and the sculptors in making things of beauty, while the common child is still fashioning the unostentatious mud-pie.

Of course, children do not produce masterpieces: not so much because they lack skill as because master-works are always the embodiment in some form of the profoundest meanings of life, and for that meaning they must perforce wait upon experience for knowledge.

Until, then, we learn to regard the child as our fellow man, with like passions, with like capacity with ourselves, — save only for this difference in knowledge of the world, visible and invisible, — we shall continue to write of and for him falsely. It must be admitted that we write of and for adults falsely, too, but that comes from mere lack of capacity, — not because of a preconception. Thousands who rush into print are hopelessly life-blind, — or color-blind to life, to express it more clearly, — and naturally they are not aware that they are confusing red with green. There will always be a large audience of those who suffer from the same defect in vision, of those who are only puzzled by the endeavour to make them see the difference between the rose and the foliage. It is quite useless to point out to Laura Jean Libby's clientèle the iris play of Shakespeare's thought. One may ignore these earnest incompetents, and deal only with those who are fitted to see truly, but who labour within the bonds of misconception. Let us demand of these that they

clear their minds of the cant of the new sentimentalism, and give us the real child. He is strange and fascinating enough, Heaven knows, — this potential man laboriously engaged in learning the answer to the riddle of life, — to give us endless possibilities for the profoundest and subtlest literary studies. Suppose we might hope for a new Thackeray to write us a "Book of Immature Snobs." How delicious it would be to have a master lay bare all those youthful ambitions and rivalries and meannesses that rage in the nursery and the school-room. Instead of the Loves of the Angels, how much more charming might be the loves of the children. Those brooding tendernesses expended upon cock-eyed, grubby-nosed dolls, or upon stodgy, unresponsive rabbits. Those knightly passions for curly-haired, pink-cheeked teachers, or the shy, wild emotions aroused by the soap-fat man.

If we could but adequately picture the fresh, ardent passions and romances of the little people, I think we would find our adult emotions in comparison but pale and faded sentiments. How little we guess all the play of hidden feeling that leaves no mark upon those smooth and dimpled masks; those masks whose chins we chuck with condescending speeches about careless, happy childhood! A small person of the age of seven lost a ring that had been

given her upon an anniversary, and she accepted without protest or explanation a severe punishment for her carelessness. Long years afterward she explained that, having heard by chance the quotation,—

"What, they lived once thus at Venice, where the merchants were the kings,
Where St. Mark's is, where the Doges used to wed the sea with rings," —

she had brooded over the idea with a passion which led her at last to seal nuptials with the great hot muddy river that coiled and rolled, with blind indifference to the tiny circlet laid in its brown bosom by the ardent baby,—she all unaware of the strangeness of the atavism of this survival of pantheistic ceremonies, that had come down to her, through untold years, by more devious channels than she could dream.

Thousands of equally curious stories might be told of children if we could win their secretive confidences: stories of emotions that hide themselves deeply from our condescending pleasantries, our blind laughter, our ignorant scorn.

So much for the literature *of* children. The literature *for* children is a matter of much more seriousness. Placed as they are in a world where all is strange and new, where they have everything to

learn, and must, in our literate day, get a large part of their information from books, one would suppose that parents, and pastors, and masters, would devote the most passionate care to ensuring that children should get proper and accurate impressions at all costs. And yet such false, meretricious forth-puttings as the Elsie books sell widely enough to support a publishing-house. Take the great mass of literature written and bought for children by unthinking elders, and can any one, after examining it, truly affirm that they aid this immature man to understand the world in which he must live?

There are some honourable exceptions, of course. The "Jungle Book," with its insistence upon the law of the pack, is a wholesome corrector of Buster-Brown influences; and the sweet, wise pagan play of the Uncle Remus stories should counteract the Elsie maudlininities; but in bulk the child's literature of to-day is inept beyond expression.

We have become so sentimental in our reaction from the old sternness, that we no longer allow anything sorrowful or tragic to be mentioned in the books for children. It is an actual fact that a kindergarten teacher, when asked where beefsteaks came from, hesitated, and stammered forth at last that the nice, kind, good cow *gave* them to us! The modern affectation is that the dear little child is to hear no-

thing but smooth things about this best of all possible worlds, and that childhood's tear must never, never flow. They must know nothing of pity or terror, and there is apparently no fear that these sentiments may atrophy from disuse, though one finds most of the young ones brought up under this régime with sensibilities as smooth and callous as pebbles. There is even one famous and successful periodical for young people that bars all fairy tales, and serves up a hash of anecdotes, and romances of rural base-ball clubs, as the mental nutriment of its readers, apparently to the complete satisfaction of the parents, as the circulation of this periodical is enormous. A mind forming its impression of life from these stodgy tidbits is inevitably developed into cold, unimaginative commonplaceness — dull, vulgar, and dreary to the point of horror.

I, it must be admitted, have reached that time of life when one begins to praise the old days and ways, — begins *laudare tempora acta;* and yet, little willing as one would be to see the ancient methods revived in all their sternness, one may be far enough away from them now to see that there was a certain — perhaps unintentional — wisdom in those methods. Truly, one did not emerge from childhood then in smug self-satisfaction and absorption with one's self.

One was prepared to underline Longfellow's erratically original proposition that

"Life is real! Life is earnest!"

and one more than half suspected that one was the chief of sinners. If there were clouds of glory trailing, one was profoundly careful not to let any of one's elders catch one at it, but at least one knew the meaning of pity, and of romance. There was bred into one's bones the great poetry of the Hebrews and their marvellous pictures of

"The old human heart with its joys and its pains."

You cut your teeth in those days on the great classics of literature. The books written for children were so arid and didactic that one gladly turned to Shakespeare, to Cervantes, or to that long, long row of black-bound volumes which non-committally called themselves "The British Poets," but which, like Portia's leaden casket, contained treasure; contained the riches of the old ballads; of "The Eve of St. Agnes"; of "The Ancient Mariner"; of "Alexander's Feast"; of "The Rape of the Lock"; of "Marmion." Instead of memorizing jingles out of the back pages of "St. Nicholas," one was forced to commit to memory the Psalms, Gray's "Elegy in a Country Churchyard," and

"The mountains look on Marathon";

the beauties of which meant little to one then, but which planted, like seed, produced fresh and more flowers every year.

You were not fed upon modified milk in those days. You were bid to set your teeth into the strong meat that had been prepared for men; and if you did not immediately and fully digest it, yet it furnished you with the red blood of real life. You read the "Morte d'Arthur," the story of the Paladins, in the sonorous original cadences, not in some version watered down for the infantile mind to the point of blank insipidity. Moreover, one had time to read, to ponder, and to dream. The days were not cut out for one on a fixed pattern, as is too much the habit of our own. A mother recently explained that she made it a point to see her children for half an hour each day — not that she lacked the time to give to them, but that they had no spare hours for her. Every waking moment, except that brief thirty minutes, was carefully apportioned. So many hours to lessons in books, and all the rest to drill, dancing-classes, fencing, swimming, riding, music, drawing, dressmaking, carpentry, languages, and nature-studies. A cloud of professors of everything under the sun surrounded them, as if they were young sovereigns preparing to rule kingdoms. They hurried through youth with their little

tongues hanging out with mental and physical exhaustion; never a moment for fantasy, never an instant to take account of the riches heaped upon them; not an hour to turn over, to study, and to play with the myriads of new ideas poured into their heads every day. Naturally, under such a régime there could be no room for growth of individuality or of poetry in their harried childhood. It is for these over-fertilized, over-tasked young minds that the new system of short-hand reading has been invented. Pedagogues meet in national convention and solemnly calculate how many tenths of a second may be saved by teaching the two sounds "Kah-te" instead of the ancient long-winded c-a-t, *cat*.

What room is there in the days of such as these for four chapters daily of the prolix Hebrew scriptures? International Sunday-School leaflets take their place. How should such a one find time to saturate himself in the classics of literature! "The Boy's Charlemagne," "The Child's Shakespeare," the World, the Flesh, and the Devil boiled down in a vacuum into Leibig's or Armour's Extract of Literature is his pabulum — administered in sterilized capsules. Indeed, he would probably hardly understand the originals if they were given him. Even so modern a poem as Stevenson's "North-

west Passage" made a child of six stare uncomprehendingly: —

> "Must we to bed, indeed? Well then,
> Let us arise and go like men,
> And face with an undaunted tread
> The long black passage up to bed.
> . . . . . .
> "Now my little heart goes a-beating like a drum,
> With the breath of the Bogie in my hair;
> And all round the candle the crooked shadows come
> And go marching along up the stair.
> . . . . . .
> "Last to the chamber where I lie
> My fearful footsteps patter nigh,
> And come from out the cold and gloom
> Into my warm and cheerful room."

In this modern child's electric-lighted, steam-heated existence there was no comprehension of dark, icy, lonely hall-ways, of ghostly, flickering candle-shadows, or of the deliciousness by contrast of the rush into firelit, companioned nursery. The poem had no meaning for her. Civilization had eliminated fear and discomfort from her cognizance.

On the other side of this question of the over-trained, hurried infant has arisen a small band of revolutionists, who insist upon trying the experiment of leaving the child free to develop his instincts, wholly untrammelled by any interference from his

elders whatsoever. One of these has solemnly given to the world a record that his son's natural instincts took the eccentric form of buttering the door-knobs! Carrying the fatuous sentimentalism of the followers of Froebel to the reduction of absurdity, one of these faddists has even gone so far as to be forced by his horrified neighbours to erect a wall about his grounds, since his principles would not permit him to oblige his offspring to wear their garments when they felt inclined to play at the game of Eden. Out of all these varying experiments the humorous writers for the magazines have given us some delightful records of the earnest, experimental parent, and the bewildered child.

One of the results of this modern tendency to keep from the child all knowledge of real life is an exaggerated prolongation of infancy. One regards with horror now the early marriages of only a few generations back. It seems to us almost an echo of the days of the Minotaur to hear of girls of fourteen or fifteen being made wives and mothers. We forget to allow for the fact that these youthful brides were more mature in knowledge of the meaning of existence than are women of twenty to-day. History is full of stories of boys of the same precocity mounting thrones, leading armies, presiding in council, at an age when our sons are still completely ab-

sorbed in childish games of football, and are hardly trusted to choose the patterns of their own trousers. The sons of well-to-do parents are not expected to be entirely self-supporting much before thirty, and if they have achieved anything very definite before they reach two-score, we call them boy-senators, or boy-judges, or the like.

Only the children of the very poor are allowed to see life face to face. Myra Kelly, in the most remarkable and penetrating of her studies, shows us one of these products of the environment of actuality. A small Jew of twelve, who has already his own sweat-shop, in which he employs adult workers. A story of laughter and tears, the reader of which is torn between admiration and pity of that small mind so prodigiously developed, yet so astonishingly immature.

All these various attitudes to the child but repeat what we have been looking at under other aspects of our modern life, and finding reflected in the mirror of modern literature. We find here also a new interest in our fellow creatures, a new humility of attitude, the concession of large liberty to them, a new sense of their rights, and an enormous effort at conscientiousness as to our behaviour and our duties toward them.

This attitude toward the child is so wholly new

in the history of the European race, that one is inclined violently to envy those sufficiently young to have a reasonable hope of living long enough to see what it will all come to. Will these new generations growing up in an atmosphere from which all suggestion of pain and violence is hidden, find our literature of the past as incomprehensible as the little girl did Stevenson's verses? Will new masterworks have to be created as warm and shadowless as our modern passageways? Into those little hands we must entrust all the treasures of our past — knowing not at all what they will do with them.

V

CONTEMPORARY POETS

BERNARD SHAW says—and like most of his sayings, it is an interesting half-truth:—

"Nevertheless, journalism is the highest form of literature; for all the highest literature is journalism. The writer who aims at producing the platitudes which are 'not for an age, but for all time,' has the reward of being unreadable in all ages; while Plato and Aristophanes trying to knock some sense into the Athens of their day, Shakespeare peopling that same Athens with Elizabethan mechanics and Warwickshire hunts, Ibsen photographing the local doctors and vestrymen of a Norwegian parish, Carpaccio painting the life of St. Ursula exactly as if she were a lady living in the next street to him, are still alive and at home everywhere among the dust and ashes of thousands of academic, punctilious, archæologically correct men of letters and art who spent their lives haughtily avoiding the journalist's vulgar obsession with the ephemeral.

"I also am a journalist, and proud of it, deliberately cutting out of my works all that is not journalism, convinced that nothing that is not journalism will live long as literature or be of any use while it does live. I deal with all periods, but I never study any period but the present, which

I have not yet mastered and never shall; and as a dramatist, I have no clue to any historical or any other personage save that part of him which is myself, and which may be nine tenths of him or ninety-nine hundredths, as the case may be (if indeed I do not transcend the creature), but which, anyhow, is all that can ever come within my knowledge of his soul. The man who writes about himself and his own time is the only man who writes about all people and all time."

The other half of the truth, which Shaw forgets, or chooses for the moment to ignore, is that the man who writes for all time must, in his contemporaneousness, express also the immortal sameness of human life and emotion. When Shakespeare lightheartedly transfers Warwickshire yokels and Elizabethan young ladies and gentlemen to the Athens of Theseus, their importance and eternal interest lies not alone in the fact that they are highly contemporaneous English folk, and that future ages must be enormously interested in knowing how simples and gentles of that day really thought and felt; but that these later readers will be moved and touched by the proofs that on all fundamental questions these British folk feel and act as do the English and Americans of the twentieth century. This link of the human heart makes them immortal through their eternal actuality.

Compare those wanderers in the Midsummer

Night with the crowd on its way to the Festival of Adonis, in the idyl of Theocritus, and one realizes how like Bottom and his friend the Joiner were to Praxinoë and Gorgo; how like both Bottom and Praxinoë are to New Yorkers of the same class taking the trolley to Coney Island on the Fourth of July, or the Londoner celebrating Lord Mayor's Day. The beads are separate, but the cord of life and feeling on which they are strung is continuous and unbroken.

It is just through this immortality in contemporaneousness that the Poets — those properly spelled with a capital letter — have kept their high place in the life of the world throughout the ages. Their expression of the emotions of their time does not lag behind by even a day. The yellow journal's flaming extra is belated and stale by comparison. For not only are poets recorders of their own day: they run before with a torch to show the next steps in the paths we are treading, so that, instead of putting down our feet darkly and with timidity, we step boldly and safely forward on the road of existence. Before we, who are dumb, have dreamed of the blind changes taking place within our own souls, they, the poets, have clarified the chaos of our longings into ideals, and lit the aspirations by whose flame we push on to higher levels.

To the four-square man of affairs the value given to these rhymes in the treasury of the world's valuables has always been a matter of impatient astonishment. That a mere stringer of phrases — a "word-braider" — should outlive the doer of deeds, the creator of actual things, seems, by all the tests with which he is familiar, to be a mere fantastic twist of events contradicting every lesson of his life's experience. That the men who have ruled and warred, have wrought and builded, should, nine times out of ten, be remembered only because some rhyme-monger chose to praise or blame them, seems to him like the witless mockery of a fool. And yet the practical man does see, if he ever stops to think about it, that the slow furnace of elapsing time calcines all the concrete things he reverences to dust and nothingness, and almost the only things the world saves from the universal destruction are the golden words of some maker of phrases, in his own day scarcely known by name to one in a thousand of his contemporaries.

Bernard Shaw has put his careless but penetrating finger upon the reason of the weakness and evil days of our practisers of the gentle art, among whom there are but two really male voices — and they not of the first order; poets who have in any sense adequately expressed the life and aspiration of our time.

Can anything be more tragically unimportant than the outgivings of most of our singers? A good half of them are employed merely as "fillers" between the prose articles of the magazines; and the man who can express his diluted little drop of thought in one verse of from four to six lines is the poet who can best count upon disposing of his wares. For in the making up of the pages of a magazine there is frequently at the end of some article upon travel, at the conclusion of a short story, a small space which must, for the sake of symmetry, be filled, and a poem costs less than a colophon!

These little verses all appear to be made according to a fixed recipe — a mild sketch of landscape with a tag of moral. Three barred sunset-clouds, and a hope for something beyond them, — a morning mist, and an aspiration that sadness and clouds will melt before the sun of a fuller day, — one knows what these fragments of preciosity will be before one reads them; the formula of their manufacture being so invariable and so simple. This is the sort of pillule of poetical bread our soul's need of song is fed upon: —

> "The road winds over the hill
> Where sets a rose-white star;
> O tired heart, be still:
> The end is far.

"Down in the darkening west
The chill winds fail and veer;
O wild heart, rest, rest!
The end is near."

Or, if something longer is attempted, we get a stale harking back to the pastorality of the Theocritian days, when shepherds and shepherdesses, fauns and nymphs, were still a vital and actual element in the lives and imaginations of the listeners. It is thus that the singers of our day concern themselves with outworn toys, with airy unimportances, in the midst of our red centuries of change and turmoil, of crumbling creeds and high discoveries. A cricket chirping on the hearth would as adequately voice the prodigious mental and moral adventures of our potent age. No wonder poetry has been brushed aside in the midst of our so colossal affairs, and that the pipe of the singer is drowned in the brazen clamour of the market-place.

In course of years — some dozens of these seed-pearls of verse having accumulated — they are gathered up by the frugal creator into a slim book, are printed one to a page (a penn'orth of song to such an infinite deal of margin), and the whole dropped into the sea of letters to be swallowed into oblivion like a meek grain of sand, having served the purpose of presentation copies to the poet's friends, or of

Christmas gifts from lazy and economical givers to indifferent and ungrateful acquaintances. A few lay out their dreams on larger lines; but the lines are mostly reminiscent, and since Tennyson, Browning, Swinburne, and Victor Hugo passed beyond the inspiration of youth and fresh manhood, there have been but two men who have had even a glimmer of the proper labour and service of the poet; but two who have in any sense seen the meaning of our modern life.

It is not of course inevitably necessary that the contemporary thought should move in modern scenes. It appears to be of no importance what frame shall be chosen for the picture. Shakespeare could as adequately show us the soul of his age moving about in an Athenian wood, a Roman Forum, an Egyptian palace, as in a London street or a Warwickshire lane. Under whatever skin we meet him and his imagination, we meet the Elizabethan: that Englishman of the spacious time of the great Queen, a being of mingled subtlety and simplicity, the red blood of high and new adventures warm in his veins, the passion and poetry of mediæval England still folding him like a purple cloak sewn with vair. A creature of exalted chivalry, and rough greed and violence; tender and delicate, vulgar and robust; standing with one hand still clasped in his ancient customs and

superstitions, but with brave eyes turned searchingly upon the widening horizon of new lands and dreams.

Milton might set his scene in Heaven and Hell, but his archangels and demons had really sat in the Long Parliament, or fought at Marston Moor. Even the clumsy cannon of his day so impressed his sense of actuality that he could not resist the pleasure of allowing his subliminal heroes to try their seraphic skill with undeveloped ordnance. They shot holes with it through vaporous antagonists, who paid slight attention to such harmless penetration, but were doubtless extremely interested by the scientific novelty of their bloodless wounds.

Dryden's Achitophels and Absaloms were fundamentally thoughtful eighteenth-century gentlemen and politicians, reposing at ease after the long Parliamentary wars, and beginning to look backward with interest upon the Papal yoke discarded with so much difficulty; slightly doubtful, in the continued ease of their new freedom, whether that yoke had really been so heavy as it seemed what time it was still upon their own necks.

Later, Shelley, Coleridge, Keats, and Wordsworth plunged into the spiritual and political turmoil of the post-Revolutionary period, feeling the need of giving articulateness to the sound of the seething

streams that boiled about the feet of the old and new ideals, of the passing and of the new-born century; expressing each, according to his nature, the awakening of the old pagan genius of the Western world, making its final effort to completely reassert itself and cast off the last obscuration of Eastern mysticism. Priests of nature, of beauty, of science, and of liberty, each called the blind multitude to come up higher into the finer air of freedom of mind and body.

Their natural successors girded themselves to meet this new cult of the body; these new problems of the soul; these new scientific doubts that were rotting away the traditional foundations of faith and obedience; and strove to find a new spiritual footing for their generation. Browning, Tennyson, Swinburne, Victor Hugo, Walt Whitman, ran on before, to show us the new paths we must inevitably travel.

The poor body — so scorned, trampled on, and contemned throughout the long period in which Eastern thought dominated the mind of Europe — found its reincarnated Greek in Whitman. So sunk were we in the grossness of a false *pudeur* concerning the body that, because he had sought to dignify and redeem it, Whitman's name was made a word to be pronounced under the breath. I remember that my first approach to a knowledge of

his works was made much as one undertakes a sea plunge on a cold day — with every nerve braced to the shock; and lo! it was a summer sea, wholesome and buoyant, and the exact temperature of good red blood. I had heard him spoken of in whispers, as of a creature repellant and pornographic, and, my tastes not leaning to the pornographic, I had therefore been cheerfully willing to omit further knowledge. But hearing by chance some one read aloud "Out of the Cradle endlessly Rocking," and realizing that one could not afford to be ignorant of the man who had written that exquisite idyl of the sea, even if one must pick one's steps in gathering jewels from the mire, I rather shamefacedly bought a copy of his poems. And those pages, far from being smeared with filth, spoke the clean joyous innocence of the young world. To him the body was not a sneaking, mangy cur to be openly kicked out of the way, and, when its hunger grew fierce from starving, to be secretly glutted with the offal of sensual appetites. It was to him a noble temple of life, whose every part was to be reverenced and adorned; a temple to be swept of all low things, to be hung with garlands, to be kept jealously in perfect order and repair. Upon whose altar, heaped with flowers and incense, were to be offered sacrifices without stain; before which altar, as before the

altars of the pastoral gods, hymns of gladness were to be sung, beautiful dances woven, and noble thoughts declaimed.

The clean-natured received his ideas with reverent and delighted understanding; but even yet the coarse-fibred minds hang back, and look into Whitman's pages with the flushed cheek and glistening eyes of secret license, seeking only a sensual interpretation of his words, and neglecting in languid ennui his triumphant songs of patriotism, his hymns to nature, and his sympathy with all of life — the life of beasts and plants, of sea and sky, as with the life of man in all its forms and manifestations, from the humblest to the highest.

It was the same resurrection of Greek thinking which inspired the golden, sonorous voice of Swinburne, declaiming our need of beauty, colour, passion, and song. Here again the dry souls that walk in unclean places found what their natures teach them to seek, but the choicer hearts, to whose shining surfaces baser matter will not cling, recognized only the glowing, creative, amorous passion that breaks forth in the blooming glory of every May; the splendid spring of youth in man and in nature.

Browning, too, felt the changing spirit of life, and, under mediæval forms, touched and revealed to us our own hearts in their moral struggles as they

sought their way to new ideals of conduct. He endeavoured to do for his contemporaries what Euripides had striven for, for the Greeks of his time. Thus and so demanded the gods; but how of the lives caught and tangled in the confusing web of religious duties and duties towards one's neighbours?

In "Sordello," in "Paracelsus," in "Pippa Passes," in "Bells and Pomegranates," we were shown the blind efforts of our own natures to reconcile old laws with new conditions, to find some path which innocence and courage, which love and hope, might tread rightly and safely through the maze of old and new ideals.

Tennyson dealt, in his differing fashion, with the same puzzles, and his Arthurian people had the outlook of our own century. The "Morte d'Arthur" and the "Idylls of the King" show side by side the changing appeal which the legends of chivalry made to the mediæval and the modern consciousness. The Guinevere of Sir Thomas Malory is as unlike the fair-haired Queen of Tennyson, as Queen Elizabeth was unlike Queen Victoria; as unlike as are the minds of the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries.

The problems of life and love, and the pressure of fate and temperament — always the same — must be met newly by each age. The human heart, with

its immortal needs, must yet reconcile the old appeals to the new conditions surrounding it.

Since these men sought these reconciliations, — these middle paths, — the attitude of our minds has changed profoundly. The widening horizons of science have set a greater gap between the early nineteenth century and the early twentieth than opened between the tenth century and the sixteenth. Beliefs and ideals that held Europe for nearly two thousand years have crumbled to dust upon being opened to the light and air of chemical, biologic, and geologic knowledge. The individual soul — which through a double millennium was the primary concern of man — has dwindled to nothingness in the discovery of the immensity of matter, in the prodigious macrocosm and microcosm of science; and the clearly defined path, along which we walked bearing that precious essence of immortal individualism, has faded from our eyes in the new and blinding light by which we see the Universe.

Love, Life, and Fate still remain. Though one be but a speck of dust, an aggregation of whirling atoms, of vibrating gases, nevertheless the old human heart still lives, still feels its old hungers and desires. Who among our singers endeavours to point our way in this new world of thought? Who expresses for us our timidities and gropings, our long-

ings for readjustment, our need of charts, and new laws and codes to fit this new enormous country of our souls? Certainly not the little tag-writers of the magazines, or the manufacturers of the vague pallid bits of preciosity which Blackwood calls "Celtery."

Science has killed poetry, we are told. On the contrary, science has opened to it new skies and a new earth, where wider, bolder wings might be spread, more splendid ideas conceived, than were ever before permitted to singers. Milton and Dante, did they live now, would not confine their imaginations to their quaint archaic heavens and hells — that seem to us as touchingly naïve and charming as the early frescoes of Cimabue and Giotto of horned devils and winged seraphim. In their day Dante and Milton explored the utmost conceivable limits of their universe — a universe that to us seems as narrow as an eagle's cage; but had the door of their ignorance been opened, they would certainly never have hesitated to soar boldly up into the face of the sun.

Darwin complained that he found in his old age he had lost his earlier keen relish for poetry; and this confession has been used often as a warning proof of how the pursuit of scientific knowledge dries up the sense of beauty: which would be interesting if

it proved anything of the sort; but unfortunately for its value as an example, it happens not to do anything of the kind: the truth being that Darwin found in his old age no expression in poetry of all the vast and beautiful realms in which he had wandered for so many years. When Thomas the Rhymer came home from Fairyland, the old simple country-side seemed ever after but dull and narrow; and Darwin, who had been living so long with wide prospects for his mind's eye, discovered that the narrow *paysage* of the older poets had lost the power to interest and charm.

Even the old shibboleths and symbols have become half-meaningless. Our contemporary poets hark back to matters outworn and forgotten. We —with the exception of the scholarly few— are no longer interested in Greek thoughts and images, because we no longer have minds permeated with study of their literatures, as the new generations no longer have their minds permeated with the knowledge of the Bible. Of old, every educated man was familiar with Hephæstus or Demeter, as he was familiar with Jereboam or Tiglath-Pileser. Now, men of the most careful mental training would cheerfully admit that they had never heard of any one of the four. To the contemporary readers of Theocritus or of Virgil, the pastoral and Olympic atmosphere was the back-

ground of their daily life, and was as vivid and vital to them as the steam-plough and the reaper and binder are to the agriculturist of to-day; but when our modern poets employ the vocabulary of Arcady, they are touching an unstrung lute that gives back no response to their dull fingers.

The outlook of the human mind in the last fifty years has been turned at right angles to its entire previous conscious aspect. In place of exclusive concern with human affairs, of the purely objective attitude toward all the rest of nature, man has, in the shifting of the mental kaleidoscope, been shaken into wholly new and subordinate relations with his surroundings. It is in this new, this subjective relation with the forces he has unchained, and as yet but partially mastered, that the world waits for the expression of its new emotions.

"I sent my soul into the Invisible" —

and the soul's prodigious adventures there yet wait for adequate words. We stand like Balboa, "in a wild surmise," gazing upon the vast new ocean of being, and like him we are silent upon our peaks of Darien. No one has yet risen up from among the little magazine-shepherds "piping ditties of no tone," to sing the tremendous epic of Science. Only Richard Wagner has tried to find some expression for

the moods of our sublime new goddess, Nature; has attempted wordlessly to formulate for us her thundering seas, her quivering Polar lights, her winds and storms, her gigantic secrets and forces, and the battles of her human offspring with his mighty mother and maker, who stands ever ready to devour her own child, but who has Nibelung hoards for him who will capture and bind her.

Stevenson and Kipling are the only two of our contemporaries in whose verse the coming generations will find recorded anything of our actual attitude toward ourselves and our environment; and neither of the two is primarily a bard, verse being with both, unfortunately, but an occasional indulgence, in relaxation from prose, though both are more likely to live by reason of their poems than of their prose, already drifting into the *démodé*. Stevenson adumbrates a little of our mingled courage and humility in such songs as "A Portrait," "The Open Road," "Not Yet My Soul," and Kipling in "Our Lady of the Snows." From "McAndrew's Hymn" our successors may guess how we felt to our new slave, steam. Kipling writes of machinery and of electricity with the same fresh and passionate relish with which Virgil wrote of bees or kine; and the busy world of to-day pauses in its affairs to listen to the poetry of these things, though it lends but a lan-

guid ear to rhymes of faun and dryad, of saint or saviour. Dumbly it feels the beauty and poignancy of its own great endeavours and discoveries, but for a male-voiced and competent singer of them it waits, as yet, in vain.

VI

THE LITERATURE OF DEMOCRACY

IT were curious to enquire," — as Stevenson was wont to phrase it, fondly aping the savorous turn of speech of the past, — it were, then, curious to enquire as to the influence of democracy upon literature. Interesting to scrutinize the revolution in letters which followed fast upon the political revolution — upon that immense *volte-face* of the mental aspect of the eighteenth century as it grew to the larger stature of the nineteenth. The intellectual subversion was very nearly as great as the political; and the waves that have circled from the commotion have hardly yet entirely spent themselves.

As we begin to draw away from the last century, it becomes at last possible to estimate the results of its endeavours, to weigh its achievements, discern the real trend of its experiments. It was but yesterday that we ourselves were part and parcel of it; still too close to guess at its real size, its true profile, now — though dead but for a decade — it already draws swiftly from us and grows remote; it ceases

to be a surrounding aura, an encompassing atmosphere. As time separates it from us, the century solidifies, takes on an outline, shapes into a character, into an entity. We begin to see its real aspect; to be able to study and understand it, as we do — or try to do — its predecessors. We find ourselves growing indulgent; growing tenderly wistful of its special qualities; beginning to pardon its faults, as we always do forgive the faults of the dead when they no longer impact upon our sensibilities; because we see of the dead, as we never can of the living, the inevitable necessity of their being what they were. We grow capable, looking back upon this so lately deceased epoch, of smiling tenderly as we consider its peculiarities and its weaknesses. We can appreciate the quaintness and endearing humour of its individual characteristics. We begin to grasp the causes — good and adequate ones, too — of those characteristics — causes that were not always obvious to us while we lived with it and were "rubbed the wrong way" by the needs of its being. Its greatness we always saw, but we were not always able to discern the wherefore of the defects of its large qualities. We can now judge somewhat the futilities and the virtues of its political ventures; can understand the literary expression of its life.

In the nineteenth century literature became, for

the first time in history, the immediate expression of the multitude, of the people. Not only did the mass for the first time become aware of itself and of its large new potencies and privileges, aware of a need of expression; but the immense sudden development of mechanical invention made books sufficiently cheap to be within reach of all the world of the Occident. Books, which had been so rare and expensive that only those avid of their contents had sought such luxuries, became the common food of all. General education, too, opened to the multitude the mysterious arcana of the practice of letters, where heretofore only the special and gifted few had officiated as priests — priests jealous of admitting neophytes, displaying a hierarchy's invariable attitude of superiority and exclusiveness. Of old, to be an initiate it was imperative that one should be dowered with special gifts and appreciations; and within the circle of those thus set apart, the usual ceremonies, laws, and esoteric intricacies of cult had been developed and preserved. The scholar, the maker of literature, though necessarily a man of his time and to some extent the mouthpiece of his age, yet knew that his efforts would be submitted for a final judgement to those of his own order; would be estimated by those who, like himself, were appointed by the irresistible election of nature to the study and ex-

pression of human ideals and hopes, of human history and human life.

The coming of new conditions, of democracy, and of mechanical achievement, suddenly swept away the aristocratic privileges of the Order of Artists. No more was the long study and painful service of the novitiate of literature necessary. Whosoever would might lift the veil and serve at the altar; and only those who pleased the bulk of the congregation were permitted to eat of the offerings, or to claim the emoluments of the temple. Contumacious prophets there might be, who roamed the wilderness, unsubservient to the dictates of a stodgy vestry; but they could not hope to partake of the baked meats of fat livings. They must perforce be content to fare hardly on such few locusts as came their way, and to season their meagre meals with but an occasional taste of wild honey.

The new congregations cared little for the old rules of the literary cult; they were indifferent to any of the prescribed rituals and genuflexions. Their preachers were required to speak in the vernacular. Only good rousing sermons in a language understood of the people ensured plump, promptly paid salaries.

All of which was very natural, when it is considered that the new audience was newly come by any

acquaintance whatever with literary expression of thought. Such as these must of necessity go haltingly at first, as a child does—spelling out ideas of few syllables, sentences with no complexity; savouring the fundamentals of reflexion, such as to scholars had long served as mere axioms, the unseen cornerstones on which they erected the structure of their thinking. Stevenson, speaking of children, says, in "Random Memories":—

"Through what little channels, by what hints and premonitions, the consciousness of the man's art dawns first upon the child, it should be not only interesting but instructive to enquire. A matter of curiosity to-day, it will become the ground of science to-morrow. The child is conscious of an interest, not in literature, but in life. A taste for the precise, the adroit, or the comely in the use of words, comes late. But long before that he has enjoyed in books a delightful dress-rehearsal of experience."

In the art of literary expression, the new democracy were but "infants crying for the light." The new mass of readers had small time or patience for intricacies or complexities of thought; small relish for the beauties of style. They desired something plain and comprehensible. Some statement of fact, some suggestion of natural sentiment as common to the peasant as to the peer; mother-love, a longing for home, or resignation to fate, expressed for

them in idiomatic, simple language. "Home, Sweet Home," "Rock Me to Sleep, Mother," "I would not Live Alway," were literally the songs that gushed from the heart of the bourgeoisie; and they wanted their emotions to be expressed in unfaceted words, with no nuances of colour or suggestion. Airy fineness; expression "drenched and intoxicated with the fairy dew of natural magic"; "those golden, easeful, crowning moments of a manner," which make literature something more than a mere statement in words, were as unimportant to them as the tinted impalpable feathers upon the vans of a butterfly are unimportant and imperceptible to the ox feeding in the meadows.

"Poor Richard's Almanack" was, they thought, something like; these were phrases they could get their teeth into, so to speak. Incontrovertible statements of general experience, expressed with no puzzling obliqueness or vagueness, were really valuable aids in the conduct of one's daily life. They liked what was offered them — in verse especially — to be straightforward, lucid, earnest. Their minds were aware of no demand for what Matthew Arnold describes as "that peculiar kneading, heightening, and recasting which is observable in style — which seems to have for its cause a certain pressure of emotion, and an ever-surging, yet bridled, excitement in the

writer, giving a special intensity to his way of delivering himself."

Such a gem as this, from Cowper, is a perfect example of the verse that was beloved of the young democracy: —

> "Do I regret the past?
> Would I live o'er again
> The morning hours of life?
> Nay, William, nay, not so!
> Praise be to God who made me what I am;
> Other I would not be."

There was no unwholesome intoxication of the fairy dew of natural magic about *that*. It was as simple, as free from puzzling complexity, as the bleating of a calf; as piously unaffected as the clucking of a barnyard hen. This was a tranquil pool of the platitudinous, in which one might swim about with calm confidence of not losing one's breath, or getting out of one's depth.

At that period the reading-world found the time and the perseverance to devour Cowper's "Task," to wade through Southey's "Curse of Kehama," to absorb "The Excursion," and "Peter Bell." Such lucubrations they felt were delightfully safe, soothingly dull. Shelley and Byron and Keats dared to scoff at and outrage the good solemn middle class, but at their peril. The blind imponderable weight of

a disgusted and shocked democracy crushed all three.

But looked at from this ever-increasing distance, one grows amusedly patient of the reign of the obvious in the early nineteenth century. Contemptuous irritability melts into a humorous tenderness for the mild affectations of the time. One becomes enamoured of the old-fashioned dearnesses and queernesses of the period of ringlets and ruffled shirt-bosoms, when that Bard of the Banal, the youthful Longfellow, created some of its most delicious masterpieces, and stirred all hearts with noble adjurations to

> "Let us, then, be up and doing,
> With a heart for any fate,
> Still achieving, still pursuing,
> Learn to labor, and to wait!"

Or Tennyson stated with solemn insistence that

> "'T is only noble to be good.
> Kind hearts are more than coronets,
> And simple faith than Norman blood."

How many an elocutionist at that period — in a simple black silk, brightened at the neck with a tulle bow and a bit of scarlet geranium — tossed back the real lace ruffles from about her wrists and simply demolished that deplorable aristocrat, Lady Clara

Vere de Vere, with a fine gesture and a nasal emphasis of this splendid truth.

It was the epoch of scrap-books — those mental rag-bags in which were collected, by ladies of literary tastes, odds and ends of axiomatic thought: the same sort of trenchant truisms which they felt called upon to underline in pencil when they came upon them in the burning pages of the lending-libraries' volumes; adding "How true!" in faint, graceful Italian script on the margin of the page. Between gentle stanzas on "Moonlight," "First Love," and the like, they interspersed (among pressed flowers) seccant outlines of irrefutable bromides.

"Life is a comedy to those who think; a tragedy to those who feel," was a special scrap-book favourite, I remember; and this Rochefoucauldian apothegm was felt to be extremely cynical and dashing. The truly gentle — those whose ringlets curled naturally — shrank from its biting irony. No doubt a melancholy necessity for the use of curling-tongs tended to a proud bitterness!

Tennyson and Longfellow, having been born to grow wings, emerged eventually from the pupa stage, and climbed laboriously out of this welter of the commonplace, cast off the trammels of democracy's limited taste, and worked into a wider air.

Others, however, arose to fill the need they had

not wholly satisfied: philosophers of the obvious — of the obvious transposed to the bass clef, with thrilling reverberations of the platitude expressed in tones of resonant solemnity.

Ponder, for example, these weighty fulminations in an essay upon "The Poet," very popular in its day: —

"Those who are esteemed umpires of taste are often persons who have acquired some knowledge of admired pictures and sculptures, and have an inclination for whatever is elegant; but if you enquire whether they are beautiful souls, you learn that they are selfish and sensual. . . .

"If thou fill thy brain with Boston and New York, with fashion and covetousness, and will stimulate thy jaded senses with wine and French coffee, thou wilt find no radiance of wisdom in the lonely waste of the pine woods."

New England boiled coffee might pass; but plainly there was something immorally suggestive in a beverage loose enough to be French.

Or, again, harken to this delightful bit of solemn homespun judgement upon poets not so blessed as to have been born Americans: —

"America is a poem in our eyes; its ample geography dazzles the imagination, and it will not wait long for metres. If I have not found that excellent combination of gifts in my countrymen which I seek, neither could I aid myself to fix the idea of the poet by reading now and then

in Chalmers's collection of five centuries of English poets. These are wits more than poets, *though there have been poets among them.* But when we adhere to the ideal of the poet we have our difficulties even with Milton and Homer. *Milton is too literary, and Homer too literal and historical.*"

The italics are not the author's, but are irresistible to bring out the complete deliciousness of the passage. It was characteristic of his time and type that he should conceive a poet's imagination as dazzled by mere geographic bulk, unaware, or forgetting, how little Greece and little England had sufficed for the inspiration of Homer and Sophocles, of Shakespeare and Milton.

Democracy crowded the lecture-rooms to be told that

"Raptures, could we prolong them at pleasure, would dissipate us. A sip is the most that mortals are permitted from any goblet of delight." Or that "Ideals are possibilities, and persons handsomest viewed by the mind's eye, as beautiful estates seen in the distance. Such is the charm of the perspective. But the moment we covet them as ours and ours only, their glory departs, the beauty fades, and they are worthless in our eyes, robbed of all that made them so desirable to us."

There is something touchingly quaint in the memory of these artless philosophers journeying about to the provincial lyceums, laden with their narrow

ideas, their stark banalities; delivering them with all the authority of inspiration to equally earnest and aspiring audiences, who went home to look up in the dictionary the unfamiliar words, deriving therefrom what a certain class still describes as "a great sense of spiritual uplift."

Yet the mass was being slowly lifted. Through these A B C's of thinking, they were laboriously spelling their way into the book of ideas; were learning to read more clearly the volume of life; gaining the power to pass beyond the primer of reflexion. So, when the famous, the beloved Martin Farquhar Tupper came, he found set for him the task of writing the epilogue of the Book of Bromides. Not because of any loss of appetite for the axiomatic on his own part, but that by his outrageous overfeeding of their propensity, he gorged even the public's vigorous hunger for truisms to the point of disastrous reaction.

I can remember when his "Proverbial Philosophy" — then passing through edition after edition — still lay on the marble-topped centre-table. That piece of furniture was the proudest feature of every well-organized American household. An argand lamp, rising from a fluffy woollen mat, invariably adorned the beloved table; and this valuable *objet d'art* was flanked at obtuse angles by Books of

Beauty, and Friendship's Offerings in binding of almost Sardanapalian splendour. The "Proverbial Philosophy" — clad also with discreet richness — shared always, in genteel homes, the chaste precincts of this meagre little altar to culture.

Alas! one must now search the larger, older public libraries — frigid mausoleums of so many dead favourites — to rescue those undeniable truths that were once on every tongue.

The mid-Victorian era found infinite satisfaction in such philosophic proverbs as this one "On Marriage": —

"Take heed that what charmeth thee is real, nor springeth of thine own imagination; and suffer not trifles to win thy love, for a wife is thine unto death. The harp and voice may thrill thee — sound may enchant thine ear, but consider thou, the hand will wither and the sweet notes turn to discord. The eye so brilliant at even may be red with sorrow in the morning; and the sylph-like form of elegance must wither in the crampings of pain."

Or this as regards "Experience": —

"I knew that in the morning of life, before the wearisome journey, the youthful soul doth expand in the simple luxury of being; it hath not contracted its wishes, nor set a limit to its hopes; the wing of fancy is unclipt, and sin hath not seared the feelings."

Of course the margins were left broad in Tupper's volume, that one might pencil again and again in an ecstasy of assent, "How true!" after such gems as this, "Of Discretion": —

"There be few, O child of Sensibility, who deserve to have thy confidence; yet weep not, for there are some, and some such live for thee; to them is the chilling world a drear and barren scene, and gladly seek they such as thou art."

Poor Martin has vanished into Limbo; yet before closing the door of smiling forgetfulness upon him, it is interesting to compare quotations from the "Proverbial Philosophy" and from some of the most famous essays and lectures of his day. Who, without consulting the books, can say offhand which bit of solemn twaddle is which?

"Follow the star first seen in your early morning, nor desist though you find the labour toilsome and your guides mislead."

"The shaft of life is wreathed with the human affections, as the vine embraces the column and climbs into the sun's rays while its roots are nourished from the mould at its base."

"We can drive a stone upward for a moment into the air, but it is yet true that all stones will forever fall; and whatever instances can be quoted of unpunished theft, or

a lie somebody credited, justice must prevail, and it is the privilege of truth to make itself believed."

"Zeal without judgement is an evil, though it be zeal unto good. The vessel founders at sea if a storm have unshipped the rudder."

And our earnest and unimpeachably moral ancestors drank in this liquid absurdity with the eagerness of sponges — up to the point of mental saturation!

It may be imagined how Poe startled this innocent atmosphere with his glooms and terrors, his acrid ironies and bold imaginings.

> "My love, she sleeps! Oh, may her sleep,
> As it is lasting, so be deep!
> Soft may the worms about her creep!
> Far in the forest dim and old,
> For her may some tall vault unfold —
> Some vault that oft has flung its black
> And wingèd panels fluttering back,
> Triumphant o'er the crested palls
> Of her grand family funerals!"

It may be imagined how such lines as these, or such delicately poignant poems as "For Annie," ran far ahead of the appreciation of those who found in the "Psalm of Life" the ultimate expression of their poetic needs.

Poe was one of the old hierarchy; one of the

ancient order of artists, practising assiduously the rules of the cult — weeping, suffering, bleeding, in the cruel novitiate that led to the dignities and freedom of the inner mysteries of the priesthood of art. The easy banal facility of his contemporaries could not satisfy the self-exacting sense of beauty of the poet who created "The City of the Sea."

> "No rays from the holy heaven come down
> On the long night-time of that town;
> But light from out the lurid sea
> Streams up the turrets silently —
> Gleams up the pinnacles far and free —
> Up domes — up spires — up kingly halls —
> Up fanes — up Babylon-like walls —
> Up shadowy long-forgotten bowers
> Of sculptured ivy and stone flowers —
> Up many and many a marvellous shrine
> Whose wreathèd friezes intertwine
> The viol, the violet, and the vine.
> Resignedly beneath the sky
> The melancholy waters lie,
> So blend the turrets and shadows there
> That all seems pendulous in air,
> While from a proud tower in the town
> Death looks gigantically down."

It is only necessary to read the variorum editions of his poems to see how these lines were pruned, filled out, altered, and rearranged, before they acquired the antiphonal cadences of their thrilling

vibrations, those sonorous undertones, that velvety, muffled music.

And how his trenchant criticisms of the current literature stung the popular purveyors of the bromidic! Of course, much of Poe's reviewing was mere pot-boiling: made-to-order praise of local writers, demanded by editors who paid so much a line; — not even so much a line as the proverbial penny, alas! — to this poor harried, starveling poet. Apollo was set to herding the flocks of Admetus, and the wages were low. But occasionally Poe wrote criticism to please himself, to express his own acute judgement; and how violently the "six best-sellers" of the day resented his penetrating assay of their real value, we know. At the time they revenged themselves by inventing scandals: by accusing of sottishness the man who, before the age of forty, had produced sixteen volumes; who had evolved an entirely new style in verse and in it produced half a dozen classic lyrics; who had created the only important criticism done in America up to that time; who had made himself master of the art of the short story, and embodied in his own tales the inspiration and suggestion of half of his successors. Every work that came from his hand was created with the painstaking toil of the exact artist. To-day, enough is known of the effects of alcohol to make

it sure that a sot cannot labour continuously, devotedly, patiently; but the nine-lived vivacity of a libel has been shown in most of the comment awakened by the recent centennial of Poe's birth, in which the air of indulgent pardon is assumed to this passionately industrious student and creator.

Even yet a mordant bitterness lingers in the New England mind against Poe; a sense of outrage that the critics of Europe should have singled him out as the one American — save Whitman — sufficiently important to merit volumes of criticism and analysis, to be worthy of laborious and skilful translation, when the names of our didactic versifiers awaken not an echo in their consciousness. The American critic, Mr. Brownell, has recently, with impatient contempt, striven to show these wilful Europeans how mistaken is their judgement. He accuses Poe of "lack of substance," and — amusingly enough — of "aridity of imagination." He brushes scornfully aside, with scarcely a mention, that ablest and most sustained of all stories of adventure, "The Strange Adventures of Arthur Gordon Pym," and ignores that terrifying study of a broken mind struggling with the tortures of insanity, "A Tell-Tale Heart," to found his attack upon the uneven youthful experiment, "Berenice," written before Poe had mastered his medium. Dawson, on the other hand, says: —

"But the true creator of the modern short story in American literature is neither Irving nor Hawthorne: that honour belongs to Poe. Poe brought to his task precisely those gifts most essential to achievement: a powerful reason of unusual subtlety, an imagination of extraordinary vividness, a faculty of observation only less extraordinary, and, above all, a mind wholly free, wholly unfettered by tradition, and almost insolently scornful of accepted canons. His self-confidence is superb; in a man less singularly gifted it would have been ridiculous. His originality is found in the fact that he was the first man to recognize completely the artistic possibilities of the short story. He found in it sufficient vehicle for the expression of his genius. He brought to it the highest and rarest genius not only of his age, but of his nation. Both in poetry and in short-story writing Poe stands first in the literature of America."

Mr. Brownell slurs over the intense emotional simplicity of "The Sleeper" and "For Annie," to flout "The Raven" and "The Bells." These two last had a certain vogue in their day; for even the democratic multitude had a recognition for the adroit and the nimble, when raised, as in these examples, to the *n*th power. Poe himself, while not averse to somewhat cynically exploiting the only two of his poems which achieved a wide popularity in America, had too just a critical sense not to be aware of their inferiority to the limpid, restrained passion of his

verse at his highest, when he shook himself free of mannerisms and of the temptation of the *tour de force*, to rise into pure lyrism.

There are less than half a dozen of these higher flights, but a man may be truly judged only by his utmost possible. To reckon Shakespeare by "Titus Andronicus" rather than by "Hamlet" or "Macbeth," would be wholly to alter his place in the world of letters. When it is remembered how hardly Poe lived at all, how cruelly he was imprisoned in a provincial Philistine environment, acutely inimical to him, how poverty forced him from the pursuit of perfection to earn his bread by meagrely paid journalism, and how very short after all was his unhappy existence, to have created even so many classics was a sufficient record of well-doing.

Emerson — very naturally, perhaps, considering the quality and character of his own equipment — dismissed Poe fleeringly as "the jingle man," and continued to delight his large audiences with rotund utterances which, boiled down and strained, contained the irrefutable truth that "to be good is to be good and to be bad is to be wicked."

By way of interjection, it is irresistible to quote from Swinburne's letter to E. C. Stedman, apropos of that coterie of hard-eyed, self-satisfied Pharisees,

all of whom so industriously and resentfully deprecated Poe: —

"But the thing more necessary, though it may be less noble than these, is the pulse, the fire, the passion of music, the quality of a singer, not of a solitary philosopher or patriotic orator.

"Now, when Whitman is not speaking bad prose he sings, and when he sings at all he sings well. Mr. Longfellow has a pretty little pipe of his own, but surely it is very thin and reedy. Again, whatever may be Mr. Emerson's merits, to talk of his poetry seems to me to be like talking of the scholarship of a child who has not yet learned its letters.

"Even Browning's verse always goes to a recognizable tune. I say not to a good one. But in the name of all bagpipes, what is the tune of Emerson's? Now, it is a poor thing to have nothing but melody and to be unable to rise above into harmony. But one or other, the less if not the greater, you must have. Imagine a man full of great thoughts and emotions resolved to express them in a painting who has absolutely no power upon form or colour! . . .

"In Whittier power, pathos, righteousness (to use a great old word that should not be left to the pulpiteers) of noble emotion, would be more enjoyable and admirable if he were not so deplorably ready to put up with the first word, good or bad, that comes to hand, and to run on long after he is out of breath.

"Mr. Lowell's verse, when out of the Biglow costume,

I never could bring myself to care for at all. You know my theory, that nothing which can as well be said in prose ought ever to be said in verse."

Poe, poor young priest of art, was driven to death in the desert. But before he went he effectually shook the hold upon the public of the purveyors of the banal. The wild thrilling strains of his song, though so soon hushed, had roused the ear of the world to note the flatness of the accepted drone.

The heart of the multitude was haunted by the strange penetrating assonance of his voice; was stirred to unrest by his bold imaginings, and was no longer able to rest content with the commonplace. After the rapture of the nightingale the chirping of the sparrows was an iterant ennui. That unutterable welter of twaddle began to ebb, driven back slowly; lingering in many wide pools, up the shores of many obscure bays, but allowing to emerge at last the heads of those taller of mind than their fellows.

Democracy had mastered the simpler forms of the language of human thought and feeling, and was ready to pass on to higher things.

VII

STRONG MEAT FOR THE MASSES

THE author whose productions are of such irresistible savouriness as to induce his fellow men to purchase two thousand copies of his book, is considered by his publishers to have achieved a respectable success; if ten thousand copies are called for, he is deemed popular; but he who reaches the noble number of one hundred thousand moves up into that golden empyrean reserved for "the six best-sellers." Paragraphs about his score at golf are held to be appetizing tidbits of information worthy of record in the daily press, and a listening world hangs breathless upon the tale of the number of pieces of sugar with which he sweetens his matutinal coffee. He becomes the subject of illustrated articles in the literary reviews, and we are allowed to make the pictured acquaintance of his pet dog, of his wife and children, of his garden, and of his motor-car. We receive with thrilling interest his own enthusiastic and artless confidences as to his literary methods, his recollections of his childhood, and what he solemnly announces is his real message to humanity.

Which is all very moving, until one reckons up the English-speaking world as consisting of about one hundred and fifty millions of persons; remember that most of these millions are literate, that the majority are more than fifteen years of age, and read —at least, occasionally — a book. Looked at from the point of view of such bulky figures, how truly meagre is the vogue of even this startling seller. A penn'orth of bread to such an infinite deal of sack! The hundred thousand dwindles away to the almost imperceptible percentage of but .00066 readers in the writer's own language! Applying this percentage test to the Caucasian race alone would force him to move most of the naughts of his thousands in front of the decimal figure, and the area of the impact of his message to humanity becomes so circumscribed as to have left the unlucky race practically untouched. Of course, the number of copies sold is not in strict justice a proper measure of the number of those he has reached, as books pass from hand to hand privately as well as in libraries; but allowing the liberal average of ten readers for each copy, this benefactor has reached but a modest .66 per cent of his fellow beings. "David Harum," said to have had the longest and best sale of any American book, has at this date sold one million copies. There are, in round numbers, eighteen million families in Amer-

ica, so that even "David Harum" has reached only one out of every eighteen families.

What do all these English-speaking millions read, since even the most popular writers fail to appeal to more than this minute portion of the whole? What literary influences mould the minds of our race? From whence, and in what form, emerge the thoughts that shape the masses? How do those masses evolve their ideals? Who are their guides —who their real teachers? Who voices their aspirations, their emotions, and their dreams?

The newspaper, of course, finds in some form practically all of them. Farmer Corntossel receives his weekly journal in the remotest corner of Texas; the lumber-jack patiently thumbs back numbers in his camp amid the Oregon pines; the miner orders his paper to follow him over Chilkoot Pass; and the fisherman off the Banks receives it gratefully from passing ships.

It is perhaps not too much to say that at least a third of humanity never deflowers its virgin vacuity with any form of literature less ephemeral than a newspaper in the whole course of its adult existence. The crude, poster-like splashes of the yellow journal's caricature of life are the only impression they ever get from printed words. What, in Heaven's name, must be the conception of this world of

men formed by minds nurtured upon the grotesque misrepresentations of the sensational press? A wild, crooked, shrieking hodge-podge of—"Lovely Garbage-sorter marries Millionaire"; "Aristocratic Shop-girl Done to Death by Clubman"; "Beautiful Circus-rider Spattered in Arena by Mad Plunge"; "Society Queens Posture in Tights while Smoking Cigarettes made of Tea."

What a *danse macabre* must this world appear to such as find their pleasure in these things! Through the grey film of their foreground of immediate drudgeries and limitations, there must glimmer lurid shadow-shapes, as of distorted lantern-slides, where Aubrey Beardsley-like figures writhe in impossible postures and episodes. Or does the frenzied cacaphony of the reptile-press die away in murmurs upon the solid carapace of their dulness, penetrating it eventually as a merely mild and pleasing vibration?

Setting aside the clientèle of the popular author, and the remnant to whom sensational journalism makes exclusive appeal, there is yet to be considered the bulk of the English-reading world. To whom do they look for articulate expression of their needs? Books they have, but they pasture for the most part on various forms of periodic literature which study, and endeavour to supply, their demands. Some of

these sources of pleasure are entirely unknown to the bourgeois world. Years ago I stumbled by accident upon one of these, in the form of a weekly paper, originally founded by a patent-medicine company to exploit the virtues of its "strictly vegetable" relief for anguished insides. In its earliest pamphlet form, it interspersed occasional anecdotes and stray verses amid pæans of praise of its proprietary remedy, and gave a copy away with each bottle. So adroitly were these anecdotes and verses chosen, that the optimistic purchasers of the belauded specific seized upon the paper with even greater avidity than upon the nostrum; and almost insensibly the pamphlet grew into a weekly paper, issued independently of the drug. It was, when I made its acquaintance, still given to relating in odd corners how a few doses of the miraculous medicine would arouse in even the most languid invalid an irresistible desire to chop a number of cords of wood and walk not less than five miles before breakfast. It was still anecdotal and tidbitty, but its columns were mainly devoted to penny-dreadful fiction; and this publication had a paid subscription of seventy thousand, not inclusive of the subscriptions presented as a gift to those purchasing half a dozen bottles of the remedy. I am not sure whether this weekly still exists, but even at that time it was seen on no news-stand,

and it is safe to say that not one in ten thousand of what is known as the reading public was even remotely aware of its existence. Yet it reached a wide and admiring audience.

There are hundreds of such weekly journals in existence to-day: equally obscure to us, equally popular and famous among the intellectually submerged tenth of the English-speaking peoples.

Certainly these periodicals — all of whose contents are so surprisingly similar — give a good deal for the price, which ranges from two dollars down to fifty cents a year. They must have, too, a certain educational value, for, aside from the fiction they purvey, each and all are so welteringly instructive. In generalities they deal not at all: all is concrete — as concrete as a bullet. Without *apropos des bottes*, or any gentler method of softening the impact, the reader has fired into him the startling statement that if Rockefeller's wealth were coined into dollars, and these dollars used as pavement, it would be possible to construct a positively practicable wagon-road of silver from Oshkosh to Podunk.

A mathematical triumph of this sort must be full of mental stimulus and "spiritual uplift" to the readers.

Or else it begins abruptly: —

"It is estimated that enough whiskey and beer is produced and drunk in the United States every year to make a fall as great as that of Niagara for six consecutive hours."

It can readily be seen how richly this sort of thing conduces to culture, and to agreeable light conversation. No reflexions upon the stark fact are offered; no moral lessons hinted. There are the figures: you must work out for yourself its human equation.

At the end of a column which leaves the wicked Earl with his dagger raised above the hapless heroine's palpitating heart, or with the hot breath of the grizzly crisping Old Sleuth's *nuque*, it brusquely suggests in brackets [*To be continued*], and adds with cold remoteness that the volcano of Popocatepetl is 17,540 feet high!

These lumps of heterogeneous information lead to nothing; are led up to by nothing. They are information for information's sake, and seem to have the same charm and value for the readers that the dusty sea-shell on the "what-not" had for our simpler ancestors — a detached treasure-trove from the limitless sea — though it served no purpose of daily needs.

But anecdotes and the *disjecta membra* of information serve only to fill the chinks. The main body of the contents of these hebdomadal visitors consists of fiction. For fiction the appetite of their readers is practically insatiable. This is not a new tendency.

The people have always loved a tale, and though there be those who affect to scorn fiction, so well-balanced a thinker as Aristotle was of the opinion that the highest and rarest element in literature is a first-rate story adequately unfolded. Long before Pope was born, it was recognized that the proper study of mankind was man — though it must be admitted that man as found in these weekly papers is a "fearful wild fowl."

Fiction is the study, or attempted study, of man — man struggling in the grip of fate and passion, fighting the elements, subduing his natural enemies, adjusting himself to success or defeat, loving, breeding, toiling, rejoicing, dying. All these elements of fiction are to be found in every folk-literature, in every land, among all races. The earliest form in which it reached the masses was as the fable and the fairy tale. The fable was the form in which fiction clothed itself before the unfortunate exclusiveness of humanity had shut away our animal friends into the stable, the kennel, and the byre. When the pig still lay alongside the peasant in the cabin; when the dog slept in the rushes and shared the meal in the hall; when the horse was free of the tent, and the shepherd couched with his flocks and herds beneath the stars, there was no sense of divorce between man and his fellow beasts. The similarity of their

hopes and passions was frankly recognized, and the beast's likeness was freely used to explain the aspirations and the qualities of his friend and comrade, man. Br'er Rabbit, King Deer, A'nancy the Spider, the Great Mr. Tiger, Reineke Füchs, the Tortoise, the Lion, Hanuman the Monkey, and Kaa the Python, all typified the characteristics man recognized as his own as well as theirs, and such arch nature-fakirs as Æsop, and the nameless creators of folk-lore, drew equally upon the adventures and the qualities of man and beast to build up an epigrammatic criticism of life.

But while alongside the lowly, primitive tale-teller was his fellow animal, above him were forces and powers upon which he also speculated and pondered. It was from observation of these higher powers that the peoples built for themselves other tales of kings and princes, fairies, genii, and gods. These, they felt, moved in a larger air, had adventures on a more dazzling scale; yet, happily, were not so remote but that with luck, or supernatural aid, one might climb to their loftier plane and share the richness of their bright-hued fates. The swineherd's daughter might happen upon a prince strayed from the hunt in the forest, and so achieve translation to a throne. The shepherd boy might win a princess by journeying east of the sun and west of the moon to find the

Singing-Water, which that capricious young woman considered the only possibly satisfactory wedding-gift. Or a fisherman might perchance haul up in his nets one day a golden treasure that should suddenly change him into an eligible *parti* for son-in-law to a king in financial straits.

It was the holding out of these vague but lovely possibilities that made for the fairy tale its perennial charm. However grey or weary life might be, it always held at the foot of the shimmering arch of hope the possible pot of gold. Count no man inevitably unhappy until he was dead. It was this hope, this possibility, that lightened the long, dusty march to the grave. It gave one courage to face life to listen to these stories of how such an one — a plain creature just like you or me — came suddenly to a turn in the road, a dip in the plain, and lo! green pastures for the weary feet; still waters for the parched mouth; freedom from the daily care; sweet airs in which to spread the wings folded in every heart.

The fairy tale broke down all barriers, levelled all inequalities of birth, gifts, or fortune: was it not the small, the poor, the ignoble, and the weak, to whom the good luck always came? No matter how strong the wicked, he was never so strong as the powerful, capricious, impartial Goddess of Chance. Virtue was not the quality she sought. It would be

dull and flat enough if prim virtue was always to have the best of things. Good kings and dukes were often overthrown and exiled. Luck's fascination was that any one, whether deserving or not, might put his hand into her bag and possibly pull out a prize. Ninety-nine times in a hundred you got nothing, but there *was* a chance, and it was just that one chance that made it possible to set one's teeth and go on, instead of bleakly dropping down to die where one stood, in the dust and the heat, or the mire and the cold rain.

With the divorce of our fellow animals from our bed and board, the fable lost much of its charm; but the fairy tale still keeps its hold upon the masses, and it is merely a modernized version of it which is fed to them by their purveyors of fiction. Books and schooling have done their work in the destruction of the old tale-teller's properties of wandering princes, or capricious princesses. All Europe would not furnish sufficient scions of royalty to supply the needs of one weekly periodical. These have been forced to decline upon the lower, but more numerous, caste of nobles and millionaires. But while castles and cottages at Newport have superseded jewel-set palaces, and motor-cars and aeroplanes now undertake the abandoned labours of the hippogriff, the same theme eternally survives. Lovely type-

writers and shop-girls succeed to the dramatic parts previously played by the swineherd's daughter; and newsboys and railroad hands pose in the limelight of destiny that erstwhile beat upon the shepherd or the fisherman.

The people, as yet, have developed small taste for realism in their tales, or for meticulous pictures of their own surroundings. "A Tale of Mean Streets" would never have seen the light of day had it depended for consumers within those same mean streets. The dwellers there are too near the facts to rejoice in an analysis of them, and they do not see life clearly enough to distinguish the values of low tones. Those quiet grey tints convey to their imperfect vision a mere uninteresting blur. Big hot splashes of red and blue they can recognize, but these cold shades leave them cold. As the savage taste demands vivid colours in dress and ornaments, and cannot distinguish between cool mauves and greys, so the untrained eye is unable to recognize the subdued nuances of life. A wicked earl they know, but Sentimental Tommy is to them but a tiresome, unnatural fool.

After all, why not? No one resents the fact that the masses prefer a piano organ raucously banging out "Sweet Marie," or "Tommy, make Room for your Uncle," to a chamber quartette following the suave intricacies of Mozart, or a virtuoso caressing

from the keys a plaintive, questioning sigh of Chopin. One does not anticipate from the man in the street a preference for Corot over a carbon enlargement of the photograph of Mike Casey, displaying to eminent advantage the weight of his watch-chain and the sleek swirl of his plastered butcher's curl. It is accepted as a matter of course. Yet the well-meaning intellectuals are constantly engaged in futile endeavour to drag the reluctant masses up to the level of the hundred best books; to thrust upon them literature which leaves them dazed and somnolent with the strain of trying to understand it. With what relaxation and relief they turn back to the wicked earl and the bad baronet, who wallow in lurid iniquity of a good, clear black, visible to the dullest perception! How they clasp to their hearts the snow-white heroine, nearly always of humble extraction, whose virtue is of fast colour, warranted not to crock or fade! These are not confusing or baffling, with tangles of conflicting impulses of good and evil mingled in the crossed threads of human impulse. The haughty nobleman pursues a career of vice with the tenacity of a slot-hound: he hardly takes time for food or sleep. His is no eight-hour day: he does not dawdle over his job, and he dies,—as he lived—hard. On the other hand, the blamelessness of the virtuous never suffers

the minutest defacement under any stress; and if a humorous relief is introduced, the embodiment of it is strenuously waggish to his last appearance, and may be said never to draw a sober breath from start to finish.

Impertinent details do not interrupt the flow of the story, either. If the heroine is carried off by pirates, without a chance to snatch up a provision of toothbrushes or hairpins, she is rescued after years of hardships and desert islands, as immaculate and *bien coiffée* as ever. Immersions, forced marches through swamps and jungles, midnight flights, and even the famous hot breath in her hair leave her plumes still curled, her complexion fresh, and her stockings without holes. Brain fever cannot wither, nor persecutions stale, her supereminent good looks.

The *mise-en-scène* in which these superior persons move is as clear-cut and vivid as their own moral qualities. Their poverty is of the direst sort. The snow always drifts through the chinks of their squalid garrets, for they are invariably overtaken with misfortune in the bitterest weather. Their luxury, on the other hand, is accompanied by the most persistent sunshine, and they seem to be free of all the anxieties incident to maintenance, death-duties, income-tax, or heavy fixed charges.

STRONG MEAT FOR THE MASSES

The late Pierce Egan, whose volumes had a circulation surpassing the wildest dreams of the best-sellers, knew how to suggest the reckless luxury that the people love. The most popular of his stories begins upon the terrace of "one of the proudest homes in England." There — accompanied by peacocks — paced the heroine in haughty solitude; clad in trailing crimson plush, diamonds sparkling in magnificent profusion upon her snow-white shoulders, and her rich golden hair flowing unconfined, though the hour was eight in the morning, and this sumptuous young woman had not yet breakfasted!

No higgling realism cramped the golden flood of his style. One looked naturally for splendour in one of the proudest homes in England; and it was refreshing after a day at the washtub, or the loom, to realize that rank could clothe itself in diamonds and crimson plush throughout the whole twenty-four hours, if such was its splendid will.

The verbal form in which these inspiring stories are related is always as choice and rich as the costumes or the morals of their protagonists. Dialect is practically unknown, except in the mouths of the very lowest-born villains. Slang rarely defaces their pages, except such strictly genteel ejaculations as "s'death!" or "s'blood!" Sinner and saint equally express their conflicting sentiments in the most

rounded periods, which in moments of stress soar to the dithyrambic.

How full, for instance, of thrilling portent is the cry that "the finger of Fate is uncurled, and the hand of Destiny steps in to pace the marble halls!" intended as a parody, but whose awful pomp and circumstance of phrase might easily be matched from any issue of "The Fireside Companion," from any volume of Pierce Egan, or Laura Jean Libby; and Marie Corelli could easily claim it as one of her most impassioned flights.

The amount of this stuff poured forth is well-nigh incredible; the appetite for it being apparently never satiated. Its purveyors are rarely known, even by name, to the upper literary world, though their compositions form the impressions of life of the larger half of their contemporaries, and they wield an influence and incur a responsibility that might stagger the most courageous. Not that these writers do stagger under their responsibility: for the most part they seem to pour out their creations with as little concern as the sweat-shops turn out coats and shirts, indifferent as to what they fashion, or who wears it, and interested only in the weekly wage. One hears little or nothing of these authors. They seem to have none of the artistic vice of self-consciousness; to itch with no desire for fame; to

possess no Bohemia. One catches no rumour of their message to humanity, or of their motor-cars; and men whose names adorn half a hundred volumes take themselves less seriously than poetlings responsible for a few tags of verse in the magazines. Neither does the world at large take seriously either these authors or their productions. Yet it cannot be that this flood of reading-matter does not leave behind it some deposit in the minds over which it passes. In its favour it is to be noted that virtue is always triumphant; but can it be that these fantastic misrepresentations of life do no harm? For the last half century the democratization of printed matter has drenched the masses in a modernized, vulgarized fairy-lore, and it would be of value if scientific methods of investigation were applied to the study of what its influence has been. For it is a new influence. The fiction of the past was sparse and ancient, and but few, compared with the number of readers of our day, came under its spell. This question tempts speculation.

On the whole, this meat of the masses leads slowly, almost imperceptibly, toward higher things, through forming a taste for reading. The endless multiplication of the free library insensibly insinuates a better sort of literature upon the notice of the masses, for the library does not, as a rule,

admit the shilling-shocker: it bars Pierce Egan and Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth, and their later confrères. In default of its favourite sweets, the proletariat reluctantly nibbles at the wholesome bread of literature, and in some cases develops a taste for it.

VIII

THE BOOKS OF THE BOURGEOISIE

UPON no development of the human spirit can one strike one's hand and say, "At this point it had its beginning — here it had its end." For whether it rise or fall, the curves droop by such imperceptible gradations to the nadir, mount so slowly to the zenith, that not until the extreme point is passed can one look back and perceive when and where the change in direction was begun.

The tide of the sea, while it rises, falls back from the shore with each wave, though each following ripple climbs an almost immeasurable distance higher than its predecessor. The rising tide of general intelligence is almost equally slow, equally imperceptible, to the eye.

Who can say when it is that Caliban, nosing in the offal for his food, first looks up to regard his fellows with a gleam of interest, to speculate as to their thoughts, to compare with his own their hopes and their aspirations? How much later is it that he suspects the existence of a Setebos? When does he commence to ponder upon that Superman to whom

he credits like passions with himself, translated to a larger scale — and thus begins to fashion his gods in his own image?

From that first obscure turn of the tide of the spirit begins the lap, lap, lap of the ripples; each passing upward a little more, each retreating in turn, but never falling back quite so far as the last; forever pushed forward by blind but irresistible impulse that, apparently defeated in every wave, never relaxes its onward surge.

While the spread of education, and the cheapening and multiplication of books, have seemed to produce a sudden and unprecedented rush forward, it is not to be supposed that the mental growth of man has changed the manner of its progress. There is still the falling back from each impulse in the inertia of spent effort. Still so slow is the coming of the flood, that only the gradual submergence of the rocks of error and ignorance show that *per se muove*.

We have watched the fable and the fairy tale transformed into the shilling-shocker, and the wave seems to fall back as we see the old wholesome wild savouriness of the oral tale degenerate into the vulgar absurdities and pomposities of to-be-continued fiction. Yet a certain advance is obvious in the very sophistication of the new form, which brings it

a little nearer to real life, a little closer into touch with the world as it is. The hippogriffs and dragons, the witches and warlocks, acceptable to the child-mind of the world, are *vieux jeu* to the proletarian. He demands stage properties more assimilated to facts, though the plush breakfast-frock and the wicked Earl are close enough to realities to satisfy his untrained, unexacting taste.

Let me hasten to interject at once that to set up the realities of life as a goal is not to insinuate that a bald naturalism is a higher form of art, requiring a more developed mind for its appreciation. 'T were to reopen the endless discussion, the whole bloodless and indecisive combat between the Romantics and the Realists. Far be it from me to recommend the Slough of Stodginess as an eligible building-site. Let the blind, if it please them, deny the existence of the rainbow: it in no way alters the fact that the light of common day may be broken up into glories by refraction through certain intangible vapours of the atmosphere, and the dewy shimmerings in the soul of man are as much an actuality as are fried onions or a braying ass.

The stark realist confuses facts with truth; is unable to understand that facts are merely the loose stones of truth, from which, 't is true, one may build

the dwelling of the spirit; but that unorganized, unarranged according to some preconceived ideal, they can afford no satisfactory shelter.

The sheer romantic, on the other hand, never looks for stones for his building, for any actual or concrete material of any sort. He is content with castles in Spain; with those draughty and unwholesome domiciles whose walls are as unsubstantial as the massive dungeons of an opera back-drop, which flutter in every current of air. His constructions make as warm and substantial a home for the mind as if built of perforated-paper valentines.

Truth, perhaps, after all, is the sum of all the figures, not the figures themselves. It is the something that shines through the realities and turns them to beauty; the warmth and meaning which glows suddenly through a commonplace landscape or an uninteresting life, infusing a divine sentiency and fairness, and revealing the true significance of Keats's so often misunderstood, —

> "Beauty is truth, truth beauty, — that is all
> Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."

But beauty and truth are revealed only by the refraction of idealism, chemically dividing the whole light of life into its component peacock-tints. The rose and the emerald, the purple and the gold, are always there, but needing to be bent through the

spectrum of the imagination before the facts give up their beauty and truth.

By these slow advances, then, with continued relapses, does the literature of democracy climb up from the level of the cardboard puppet-drama of the masses to the books of the bourgeoisie. The bad baronet ceases to be quite so crassly vicious, the proudest homes of England are slightly less plushy, but a deplorably immoral peerage still ravages their pages with gilded sin, and satin sofas and "real lace" handkerchiefs are employed with a truly dazzling profusion.

Old Sleuth and Gap-Toothed Bill do not pursue redskins and grizzlies, and foil bandits with such superhuman skill; captains courageous may not single-handedly redden the seas with the accursed gore of Chinese pirates; but the reader is still dragged through mechanical adventures, whose thronging multiplicity is as fatiguing and confusing as a three-ringed circus. Or one is offered detective stories as woodenly unlike the real criminal's conflict with society as the street fakirs' key-wound toys are unlike the supple, stealthy crawl of a tiger.

Ouida — that erstwhile darling of the bourgeoisie, with her dashing guardsmen and languid duchesses — had unpruned and inchoate, but glowing visions of life. Upon her conventional lay figures she loved

to drape garments of real texture. They moved against a theatrical background, but it was a theatre open to the sky and the winds. One had a sense that beneath the painted masks, the tin armour, she had unrealized imaginings of the pulse of warm blood, the flutter of living breath. For now and then these stilted phantoms would pause in their posturings and break through their studied phrases with some passionate truth, with a pungent aphorism — such as "principles are a wooden palisade; temperament is a stone bastion." So that one started with a sudden sense of a possibility that these marionettes had some touch of life.

> "This corpse — you would almost say
> There pined a soul in the clay!"

Marie Corelli and Hall Caine, and their congeners, through all their quaint fantasies, see dimly some simulacrum of the real drama of existence, though their painting is laid on in *criard* daubs, lacking modelling and shadows, and as flat as the artless productions of a child's colour-box. Yet one feels that there stirs in them an unavailing but painstaking endeavour to see and to record the truth. Some sense of rejection and selection there is, some sense of personality and character, in all their inadequate attempts; and their readers, themselves but mistily aware of any nuances, — moving in but two dimen-

sions, — find these attempts stimulating and satisfactory.

A great step upward was made when the Sentimentalist dawned upon the consciousness of the century. With that coming, the age of cold iron was closed. Blood and fire were wiped out by the genteel and the domestic affections. Fiction, hitherto *ferox*, was transformed to the hearthstone pet. In the place of the ravening pirate appeared the unostentatious bank-clerk; and one might remain at home in full enjoyment of baths and toothbrushes, and yet be a heroine of the three traditional volumes. Brain fever might still be required, but one could hope from immunity from gunpowder and small arms. No more clashing of steel and slops of gore. Nothing more violent than a sprained ankle, a runaway horse, or a bad-tempered bull was employed when the exigencies of the plot required a bit of action. These were far less noisy and mussy than the old mechanism, and with luck an obdurate parent, and a really "strong heart-interest," might pull one through to "finis," and otherwise permit one to lead a quiet life.

Investigation leads me to suspect that the real emancipation of the heroine was owed to her own defensive invention of the hoopskirt. She, no doubt, artfully divined that the boldest pirate would shrink

abashed from ravishing off a young woman clothed in such an unmanageable device; and how could the most abandoned ruffian hope to seize a young lady, and fling over his saddle-bow a fainting form, endued in such a costume?

This connexion between the crinoline and the milder forms of romance has, I feel sure, not been heretofore guessed by the acutest critics, and I proudly claim for my own historic acumen the discovery that it was the harassed heroine who slipped over her head that wire-cage, remarking with mild firmness, "Let us have peace!"

However this may be, with the coming of the domestic novel, the bandit, the pirate, the Giaour, the magician, the highwayman, the gentleman-adventurer, and the hapless heroine — all the time-honoured figures of the conventional pantomime of romance — faded into unfashionableness, fell upon evil days, grew shabby and down-at-heel, and sank at last to doing their outworn "turns" on the cheap stage of the penny-dreadfuls. A whole new world of mild bourgeois came forward to replace them: the high-minded and consumptive curate in the slums took the spot-light, where erst the younger son of a noble-but-impoverished-family of Brittany or Scotland had been wont to brandish his sword and carve his way to the King's favour. The oppressed gov-

erness wrung forth the tear that once flowed for her betters, and the purse-proud wife of a parvenue merchant stabbed the gentle heart of the aforesaid governess with her acrid tongue, instead of casting her into a dungeon, or imprisoning her in a turret-chamber.

The chorus, too, was transformed from a crowd of beggars, gypsies, inn-keepers, monks, cardinals, and men-at-arms, to impassive butlers, tender-hearted housemaids, fatherly parsons, family doctors and solicitors, members of Parliament, and bankers.

Scott was the last impressario who assembled all the old Company of Players for a grand farewell benefit performance, and even he allowed here and there a minor part to be assumed by some ambitious youngster of the new school. Dickens owed his enormous popularity not only to his exuberant vitality and humour, but almost as much to his introduction of an entirely new personnel upon the scene. There are always links between the old and new, and Sir John Chester, Lady Dedlock, and others still clung to the methods of the old school; but it is perhaps difficult to realize now how surprisingly fresh and delightful must have been the effect of Dickens's characters upon the readers of his day. Even for those who but dimly understood his lambent gaiety and wit, who missed entirely the veracity of his perception, his books had the charm of a play acted by one's

own neighbours, where the quality of the representation is of less importance than the fact that the parts are assumed by Uncle John and Sister Mary. Here was the person in the next house, the mayor of one's own town, the butcher who called every day for orders, even the hired man, figuring in the drama of existence! These took on a new significance, gathered an aura of meaning which transfigured them into something strange and large. Why, just think of it! Grandpa and Mr. Jones, the linen-draper, had emotions and adventures exactly as if they were knights or men-at-arms. There was, when you came to look at it, as much pathos in the woes of Mrs. Barton, the parson's wife, as in the afflictions of a countess.

Only study and comparison can teach one fully to understand how complete and how surprising was this substitution; how radically the axis of attention was shifted.

Henry VIII, by his centralization of power in the Crown, altered the type of domestic achitecture in England. When every noble and gentleman found it necessary to be prepared to defend his premises from possible attack by his neighbour, it was imperative to construct his dwelling about a secure inner court, and to render his outer walls impervious to missiles. By the time Elizabeth was firm upon the

throne, the government was strong enough to forbid local warring among the land-holders, and long before the succession passed to James, one side of this inner courtyard could be safely torn down for the admission of light and air, and the exterior of the house freely pierced with large windows.

In like manner a political change ensued as radical a substitution in literature. The shifting of the centre of power to the burgess class, brought about by the democratic revolution, moved the focus of their interest to themselves. They developed the self-consciousness which a sense of power always engenders. They wished to know how they looked; to see their own faces in the mirror of their literature.

In the tales of the past, — and the bulk of any literature consists of tales, — while good fortune might lift a lowly protagonist into the upper class, the real aim and purpose of his life was to resemble the members of that class. Nine times out of ten, it was finally demonstrated, by an old nurse's revelation of a hidden strawberry-mark, that he belonged to the aristocracy by birth, though chance for a while had concealed his real origin and quality. That he could be interesting *per se*, for his mere human personality, never seemed to suggest itself to any one.

Casting an eye back over the romances of the past, it is curious to note how completely subordinate a

rôle is played by the middle and lower classes. How entirely those classes themselves acquiesced in their own lack of dramatic value is proven by how seldom their tales and ballads claimed attention for their own emotions, being almost without exception concerned with the doings of those above them. Once they had discovered themselves, they began busily to investigate their own possibilities of romance, and the domestic drama and novel explored every corner of their souls.

The *feministe* novel, and the study of the child, came later, and by natural gradation out of this democratization of interest, which began to include the whole of the race, even to its weakest members. For a long period woman still remained but a mere adjunct of the man, and hardly realized that she could be considered as worthy of interest except as she rendered herself acceptable to him; reaching her ultimate goal when she donned orange-flowers and was dowered with his name.

The child, too, has come to his inheritance of individuality late. He might claim notice as a means of reconciling warring parents. He might, by his artless prattle, hold back the lady who was about to "sin," or embarrass her by inopportunely appearing when she had; but that he should have emotions and personality, and a dramatic value apart from his

elders, was as surprising a discovery as that previous one of the picturesque possibilities of the middle classes.

Broadening down from precedent to precedent, the proletarian has at last come into view as a natural concomitant of the new political creed of socialism. Not being as yet fully conscious of his new power, he has not yet seen himself as an interesting literary figure. He still, in the mass, prefers the tale of the type that was in large measure discarded by the bourgeois a generation ago; but we are earnestly striving to teach the cult of the brawny hero, of the factory-bred heroine. Romance has undertaken the active rummage of the slum, the mine, and the foundry. While these still serve, for the most part, as the stage upon which a noble individual of the middle class develops his condescending interest in his fellow man, and his virtuous, self-sacrificing political opinions, yet the advance-guard are now discarding this convenient ladder of the well-born reformer as a means of descending the pit, and boldly flinging themselves head-first into the deeps of humanity.

All this striving for truth, this broadening vision of life, has come wave by wave; and how often between each wave it has dropped back to the point of absurdity, it would not be easy to say. The whole body moves so slowly that it is hard to register points

of its invisible advance. Eager gifted souls run as far as they can up the sand — sometimes so much ahead of the whole mass as to lose touch with their fellows, and to lie caught in isolated pools until the rest of the tide crawls to the height of their vision and absorbs and assimilates their point of view. But always the duller, the more conventional, drag back the crest of the movement, and force it to renewed effort if it would rise. The backward pull of those who have a myopic eye for the meaning of life is tremendous. It is they who hold to the wicked Earl to the very last. They know and love him — why substitute a curate ? they ask fretfully. At last, by long propinquity becoming enamoured of the down-trodden governess, they cling to her until she has lost teeth and hair — (that admirable "head of hair") — and her pupils have become the grand-mothers of suffragettes.

Even now one may see their eyes glisten with happy recognition of the railway that lifts the mortgage by running through the old farm. They have known and loved that railway ever since the invention of steam-carriages. It is as familiar and soothing to them as old shoes. It is for such as they that the run-away horse, the sprained ankle, and the hysterical bull are dusted and brought out to serve yet once more as a means of uniting young hearts.

Dear, simple folk! — any freshness of view makes them uneasy. They insist upon the "happy ending," no matter how illogical it may be, how unlike to nature. The astounding saltimbanque of the wicked who, in the last chapter, contradict the whole tenour of their past by their virtuous benevolence and self-sacrifice, does not strain that amiable credulity. That two incompatible temperaments, after years of bitter straining upon the connubial bonds, may be completely assimilated through the agency of a few well-chosen phrases from a sick child, seems to them possible, and even probable. The strings of their hearts faithfully respond to all the old chords of the domestic affections: paternal tenderness, filial love, marital devotion, home, sweet home, and the jingling of the sleigh-bells as the characters assemble in the concluding chapter for reconciliation; the Thanksgiving turkey and the pumpkin pie — that famous pie, so crisp and hot and spicy that not even the most abandoned nature can resist its bland and soothing influence.

Ford, in "The Literary Shop," relates how Robert Bonner — in his day a famous purveyor of the reading-matter beloved of the multitude — tested all manuscripts submitted to him. He imagined an old woman, living in some village "up York State," who, when her household duties were done, sat

down to her knitting and to listen to a story read aloud by the daughter who was hoping to enter the high school. If the manuscript offered contained nothing likely to be unacceptable to that good dame, Bonner accepted it; otherwise it was returned. Her supposed taste and prejudices were his standard, and so accurate was this test that, governing himself by it, his publications earned him a fortune.

Since Bonner's day that old lady has been gathered to her ancestors, and the high-school daughter reigns in her stead. It shows how the tide really rises when one realizes that the new reader has somewhat broader horizons than her revered progenitor. She is less narrowly sectarian. She has lost that fundamental conviction that all foreigners, all actors, artists, and musicians, must be necessarily deplorable. She is less sure than was Emerson of the repulsive worldliness of French coffee. She is still, however, inclined to become nervous and uncomfortable, if the relations of the sexes are touched upon except with euphemistic frigidity. She still clings to the happy ending, and declines to consider at all the darker sides of life, but — miracle of miracles! — she has begun to develop a sense of humour. Rather a vague and rudimentary sense, certainly, but she can discern a little the play of

character, the flavour of the contrasts of existence. She likes fun — of a somewhat banal and obvious sort, perhaps; but her dear late Mama had never considered fun of any sort a desirable element of the earnest Christian life. Merriment so quickly degenerated into flippancy, and flippancy, as every one knew, was the first step in the facile descent to Avernus — to the abysses of the stage, popery, and infidelity.

The multiplication of libraries, the ever-swelling flood of books, the local club, travel, and the lecture-hall have gradually altered and enlarged the horizon of life to the man of middle class. Already the tale has ceased to be his one avenue of approach to a different environment. He begins slowly to find pleasure in something besides the imaginary adventures of other men. Books of travel interest him; the cheerful essay serves to provide that "serious reading" once confined to stray volumes of sermons. Biographies of national heroes, popular histories, and selections from the World's Best Literature aid him to envisage his surroundings. Some volume upon sociology or politics now and then attracts him, and a popularized version of scientific discoveries occasionally appeals to his taste.

This is the limit of the progress of the *petite bourgeoisie;* the *haute bourgeoisie* rises out of it by

imperceptible gradations, and advances a long step further in its more highly developed members. In America, at least, these more aspiring minds are largely of the leisure sex, and are inclined to a somewhat ambitious preciosity. These are they who used to found Browning Clubs, and have now passed on beyond the Victorian poet to the corporate study of Ibsen and Bernard Shaw. It is they who support the problem play, and devour large editions of the problem novel, and accept with portentous seriousness the naughty daring of the emancipated lady-novelist. For the classics of the past they have but little time or appetite, but the latest fad only succeeds in marching abreast of them. In the language of Chicago, they "make culture hum," and skim the whole field of learning with the light-hearted caprice and insouciance of a butterfly. They are the major part of the audience reached by the six best-sellers, and the fluctuation of literary value in those sellers is a gauge of the lack of sureness in their taste. But the range of their explorations is a proof of the widening of their horizon; and not only does their catholicity of interest make for exploration in new fields, but they have developed by their attention the collection of the endless delightful vignettes of the short story — delicate miniature studies of provincial character; thumb-nail sketches

of life, which will serve eventually as studies for larger pictures of life.

Thus, despite all reflex drag of the backward dropping waves, the tide slowly but inevitably climbs the shore.

IX

THE TORCH-BEARERS

IT is unfortunate for Americans and for their literature that so large a proportion of the American men — even among the best and most gifted of them — still consider letters and the arts as scarcely more than a woman's toy; matters unworthy any serious interest or consideration. To this attitude we owe it that our literature is, as a whole, thin and seccant, and, as a whole, suffers from what Henry James has bitterly characterized as its "damnable feminization." And by reaction the race itself, as a whole, lacks the enriching that a full-blooded, amply received body of letters ensures.

That this "Ploughman's Ideal" — the ideal that a man should sow and reap and labour with material things, leaving music and books, pictures and conversation, and such-like "truck," to women, who have nothing better to think of — should have so deep and general a hold is no doubt natural enough. Given a farm of more than two million square miles to clear and cultivate and manage, there was little time at first for aught save labour and administra-

tion. A few homely posies in the front door-yard, a Bible and almanac on the centre-table in the parlour, and Sunday-night hymns around the melodeon sufficed for all spiritual needs of beauty and grace, and prevented the women from fretting. Even now, despite the great museums in every large city, the libraries in every town and village, the opera companies and symphony societies, and frequent exhibitions of pictures, eight out of ten American men still consider the arts and letters as diversions for women, or for the idle and inefficient of their own sex. They still consider literature unworthy the serious respect and attention of any active practical man, and a leaning toward the study of it likely to be a hindrance to success in life. The millionaires, when the real work of their career is done, sometimes indulge in a large and condescending patronage of the arts; but this patronage is for the most part a mere adjunct of yachting, racing, building, and philanthropy; serving, like the accumulation of jewels for their women, as another means of displaying splendidly the eminence of their financial success.

That literature should be a serious affair, one of the keys to the complex puzzle of human life, would seem to most of them the sort of fantastic misconception of values one would expect to find in the heads of long-haired men and short-haired women,

with no adequate comprehension of actualities. These men — some of them with the most astonishing gifts and capacities, too — sit like the traditional tapestry-weavers, on the wrong side of the web of life, knotting threads of every colour through the meshes of their days, hardly speculating at all upon the nature of the great pictures they are making. And they die at last without once having had the joy of seeing their own creations. Die without understanding — perhaps without even guessing — the existence of the glorious patterns that have been wrought by their toiling fingers. That it is art, and literature more than all the other arts, which reflects the right side of their great web and displays to them the true nature and progress of their work, would no doubt be a new idea to most of them. It would be a new idea to them, that art's real mission is to lighten and sweeten labour by showing the labourer the real value and meaning of his toil.

Put into words, its message says to the weavers :—

"Look what came of all those dull brown and green threads you drew and knotted day by day, week after week! You thought it but humble, dreary drudgery, and behold, regarded from this side, you shall find that you have created this fertile, sunlit champaign embosomed in trees ; this

'Good, gigantic smile of the brown old earth.'

"See here, upon this side, the little villages crouching in the verdure like children playing hide and seek. Beyond them, in the sun, are the corn-fields where the print of the wind's feet shines grey and green as it runs across the wheat. Behind these woods and fields look how the river rounds a clasping arm, and turns the dripping mill-wheels; and through the land see the winding road: it is the road that leads from Yesterday to To-morrow.

"That horizon of misty hills, bound about the plain like a violet girdle? Oh, that was what came of the skeins that tangled so vexatiously, every thread uneven and full of kinks, and which seemed not to match anything you'd used before.

"See the King's robe, as he rides. The damascened splendour of it was wrought from those confusing tints, no two alike; appearing from your side, as you worked, as a jumble of mad foolishry.

"You remember when you tied in those soft subtle hues, that seemed pale and flat as you handled them? Well, behold what you were really doing! It is Our Lady of Love herself floating in her shell upon the sea at dawn.

"Don't you realize now that it was life you were making? Pictures of power and beauty and love; and the homes of men, and the hills of dream; pictures of earth's fatness, and of the end and the beginning. If I had not showed you the other side of your web, you would have died without ever having guessed that the weaving and knotting and tying was anything more than weaving and knotting and tying, or that on the side you never saw you were creating something very like your lost and yearned-for paradise."

And if the average sensible American man ever reads this,—which he is not in the least likely to do,—his scornful comment will certainly be, "Oh, bosh!" Then he will take off his collar, and carefully laying his cuffs with their patent fasteners aside, he will roll up his sleeves and go on with his work, his wonderful creative work. Shaping new worlds from the wilderness; modelling fresh civilizations; carving wonders from sheer impalpable brain-stuff; playing with rivers and winds and seas as a child does with toys, and thinking of it all in terms of dollars and cents, and having not a glimmer of the joys of the demiurge. He will deny himself the satisfaction of seeing the beauty and meaning of his labour. For it is art only that could show it him; that Claude Lorraine glass which gathers up the landscape into a picture, and illuminates it with magic iridescence.

The weariness and strain of this "unintelligible world" is just that it is unintelligible. It is just that most of us can see our efforts only as a tying of haphazard threads, with no particular reason for tying them, or for using those particular threads at all, rather than others, except that they lie nearest, or are forced into one's unwilling fingers by a perverse fate. Could one see the pictures growing, one would be encouraged to go on with the drabs and greys, or

even the black, knowing how necessary these shadows were to bring out the modelling and the high lights; how beautifully the perspectives melt and fuse in these long expanses of low tones. This truth makes itself visible in watching an artist lay on washes of colour; mere unmeaning splashes they seem, until a touch here and there throws them into the proper relation, and then his conception in its full beauty jumps to the eye with a breath-taking surprise and pleasure.

This is what literature is forever attempting to do for us: endeavouring to link the more disconnected manifestations of life into a picture; trying to let us into the secret purpose and meaning of it. Know thyself, it urges. Know life; know it by knowing others. Study the play and interplay of temperament; the real values, the need and purpose of the shadows and the vivid tints, and knowing these, see the imposing and beautiful picture it all makes. See what thrilling moments are really yours, even in what are seemingly the dullest moments of putting in the background to bring out the drama and movement of the figures; without which background those figures would hang in an unmeaning void.

How many false steps and starts we have made; how much helpless wandering in circles we have done; what heroic endeavours in pursuit of the ever-escap-

ing tail of truth we have undertaken, since Caliban first began to be conscious of himself, to study his fellows, and to reflect upon the circumambient powers which he personalized as Setebos. Moving about, as we do, in worlds and among souls unrealized, each effort of literature — of all the arts — is to help us to guess at the nature of these worlds and souls. To express them in language. To learn the shape, and colour, and sound, and size of the whole of existence. To map out some small space so that we may get its orientation; may walk about in it confidently and learn its landmarks. Here is solid footing, it reports. There is quaking mire. In this direction beware of bottomless quicksand. At this point it is necessary to breast the hill and walk guardedly by precipices. Here are fair meadows; and around this corner — though you'd never guess it lay hidden behind these thorny brakes — lies a *hortus inclusus*, the very garden of souls, garlanded with roses and sweet with living fountains.

Literature is the geography and the guide-book of humanity. It is a study of its geology; its winds and tides; its flora and fauna; its mountain-ranges and great streams; its configurations and climates. Daring cartographists return from its remote regions bringing strange tales and troves of their lonely wanderings, or with soundings of uncharted seas.

Others are content lovingly to study their home shire, carefully cataloguing its familiar paths, its soils and trees and flowers, its birds and insects.

A few try to guess at life's history; to search out the inter-relations of the great sleepless currents and the ever-pouring winds that sweep blowing and flowing about this world of man's cognition. These are the torch-bearers, who go before, lighting the way, showing whither we must move, pointing out the tremendous drifts of spiritual tides that drive us onward whether we will or no.

We are all naturally valley-dwellers; villagers concerned with our little immediate affairs; letting our own hands, held so near to our eyes, blot out the whole landscape.

We do not follow these torch-bearers willingly. They must take us by the scruff of the neck and drag us, protesting, up the heights from which we are to get a broader view. We nearly always kick them in the shins, like naughty small boys, while they are about this task of enlightening our darkness. Why, we ask indignantly, should we leave our warm, comfortable little *paysage*, whose horizons we know so well, whose paths had been made clear by the tread of so many feet? And all for the silly purpose of striving up to unaccustomed heights, where very likely we shall not be able to breathe

comfortably in the bleak, thin air. What good is it to make ourselves giddy just for new points of view? This outlook was sufficient for our fathers, and will easily suffice for us. Of course our fathers did come up — came up blind and featureless from the deep; slowly grew amphibious, and by infinitely slow steps climbed to where we stand. Still, now that we are here, why go higher? This is a good place; what is the need of more progress? But, despite our protests, the torch-bearer calls for "light, more light!" for more complete vision, urging us to come up higher with him, and we again, grown somewhat ashamed, begin with one accord to make excuses. We begin to say, "I have bought a yoke of oxen, and a piece of ground, and must needs go and see them"; or, "I have married a wife, I pray thee have me excused." And if he declines our polite apologies, we try what a few well-directed missiles will avail to check his fatiguing ardour.

It is only just to admit that he is never wholly discouraged by our well-meant endeavours to make him see reason. . . .

Follows an exposition of his point of view; seeing which point of view, one realizes that explaining to him that he is a conceited ass, while it may depress his spirit at times, cannot induce him to abandon his task.

"His notion of his function is ambitious, and coincides roughly with what Schopenhauer has laid down as the province of the metaphysician. He is to gather together for men, and set in order, the materials of their existence. He is 'The Answerer'; he is to find some way of speaking about life that shall satisfy, if only for a moment, man's enduring astonishment at his own position. And besides having an answer ready, it is he who shall provoke the question. He must shake people out of their indifference, and force them to make some selection in the world, instead of sliding dully forward in a dream. . . . And it is only on rare provocation that we can rise to take an outlook beyond daily concerns, and comprehend the narrow limits and great possibilities of our existence. It is his duty to induce such moments of clear sight. He is the declared enemy of all living by reflex action, of all that is done between sleeping and waking, of all the pleasureless pleasurings and imaginary duties in which we coin away our hearts and fritter invaluable years. He has to electrify his readers into an instant unflagging activity, founded on a wide and eager observation of the world, and make them direct their ways by a wise and superior prudence . . . for they all slumber in the midst of God's beautiful and wonderful universe."

It is plain to be seen that there will never be many of these persons; that the supply of torches is not likely to be exhausted by the demand of those able and willing to bear them. Indeed, it is

computed by those curious in the study of our progress in the past, that the entire story of human achievement can be grouped about something less than five hundred names. So few lights, and so wide a darkness to be illumined!

It has long been my conviction that most of the sorrow and evil of our lives, all that lurid turmoil of wretchedness that we make and always have made for ourselves and each other, has its origin not in wilful wickedness but in well-intentioned ignorance. We rarely intend to cause suffering. We do not wish to suffer ourselves. We really seek peace, and ensue it, but like Ibn Hakkul's onion-eaters, we "see nothing as what it is." Consider, for example, the Inquisition, which has come to serve as the major demonstration of human cruelty and wrong-headedness. Nothing can be more certain than that neither Torquemada nor his successors believed that they were acting like the demons they appear to us. Given a conviction that one's fellow man had a soul sure to be damned if he failed to perform certain genuflexions, to accept certain formulas; add a certainty that the damned soul suffered incredible tortures for all eternity, and that it might be rescued by strenuous measures; and is not the institution of the Holy Office inevitable? Would not any really noble and philanthropic creature put himself

to endless inconvenience to gather all such recalcitrants and

> "Have them all bound
> And tenderly drowned,"

or roasted, or racked? If not cut away, they were likely to infect the whole of humanity. What mattered the death of one, of twenty men, if thereby the rest were saved?

One has only respect and enthusiasm for the surgeon who cuts away a gangrened limb to save a life. The calm cheerfulness with which he performs his dreadful task looks to us like beautiful benevolence and heroism. Why, then, should one suppose that the instigator of an auto-da-fé did not go home to a hearty supper, and peaceful slumber, sustained by a pleased sense that

> "Something attempted, something done,
> Had earned a night's repose"?

He was convinced that he had performed an equally necessary operation upon the body of society.

That torch-bearer, Monsieur Arouet Voltaire, lugged us up — we kicking manfully at his shins all the while — to a higher point, where we saw, with considerable mortification, that these fine endeavours of ours were not only unkind but inefficient.

Once we got this point of view, we abandoned the efforts, and had the grace to blush.

An amiable and worthy physician once described to me a visit made to the office of an equally amiable and worthy confrère. His attention being attracted by certain queer, husky little plainings, he discovered that these were made by two frogs tacked to a board. Upon inquiry, he learned that they had been in this plight for several days. Now the physician who had crucified those unhappy creatures was inspired by a high-minded desire to discover certain facts which he thought might be useful to man. It is possible that eventually some one with flaming words may light this dark space in our minds, and make us feel that shrieking dogs, mutilated cats, dismembered rabbits, and poisoned horses are not really necessary for our comfort and well-being, and then we will be under the painful necessity of blushing again. When that time arrives, as the Texan said, attempting to console the widow of a man lynched by mistake for the real culprit, — "The joke is on us." And future generations, seeing further than we do, may misjudge us as harshly as we misjudge the mediæval inquisitors.

This is the task these forerunners are always engaged in, — sorting, arranging, matching colours in our chaos. Forcing us to recognize the mean-

ing and relations of the wildly confusing bits of our puzzle-picture. The task is so large a one that naturally it gets itself done only bit by bit; but every time a few pieces are put together we gain a clearer view of the relation of each fragment to the whole tableau, and are able to deal more comfortably and adequately with ourselves and our fellows. Each step of knowledge gained persuades us to abandon some unpretty, unamiable habit. We cease drowning witches, hanging thieves, capturing slaves, beating children, manacling the insane, grinding the faces of the helpless, being content with filthy conditions for ourselves and our employees. All of which we did in perfect good-nature and high-mindedness until the error and undesirableness of it was pointed out to us by persons with the gift of tongues. For it requires a Pentecostal heat to melt our cold, solidified ignorance to the point where it can flow into fresh moulds. Reason has not sufficient temperature for the work. Passion is necessary to fuse our crystallized indifference. The Answerer of our Sphinx riddles must speak in high and moving phrases; must "sweetly and nimbly recommend" his unpalatable assertions. Must, in short, turn his meaning into literature before he can make himself heard.

How persistently, in each generation, we resist

and resent enlightenment! Socrates was put to death. Sophocles was forced into a long exile. Euripides was banished. Pythagoras spent a considerable portion of his hundred years in discreetly vanishing from localities become too hot to hold him. Plato and Aristotle had their full share of discomforts. Yet when their torches, buried for a thousand years, were at last disinterred, it was found that even in their ashes lived their wonted fires, and by the light of them Europe went more surely on its way. Greece became once again a pharos to illumine the night of the world.

Not alone do the great torches irradiate, but a thousand little lantern-bearers go to and fro reconnoitring the dark corners, and casting a mild radiance into the obscurest and humblest dwellings of the mind; emitting gleams by which we discern the faces of our companions as really kind and mild, where before loomed shadowy, menacing figures that filled our wayfaring hearts with the tremors of evil potentialities. These lantern-bearers guide our feet along our narrow paths, so that we may happily forbear to jostle rudely our fellow travellers. They shine upon the obscurities of sex and age, and racial prejudices. Teach men and women, adults and children, millionaire and pauper, white and black, beast and human, to see that the hearts of

all — or very nearly all — are really full of good intentions and virtuous desires.

This is what the tales, and the verses, and the dramas, and the pictures, and the music, too, are forever saying: "Art is the Reconciler of Hearts." Showing us one another in pain and sorrow, in joy and triumph, — as we love, and live, and die. Showing us not as we show ourselves to one another, but as we really are. For most of us have not the gift of expression, and when we attempt to make others understand what is really in our hearts, either our voices seem to die away in thin air and never reach their ears at all, or we stridently speak an inimical gibberish foreign to their understandings. So that we stand abashed and awkward, or fall into angry impatience, at their seemingly wilful stupidity. Then art, the Interpreter, who knows all tongues, comes between us and tries to explain that these loud voices and abrupt gestures were in fact an offer of bread and not a menace of stones.

It is, then, plainly unsafe and unwise for any class or individual to decline, as unimportant and unnecessary, the aid of these light-bearers in travelling amid the shards and pitfalls that bestrew the shadowy path we all must tread.

X

THE LITTLE MEMBER

"Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things."

AN enlightening human experience is to watch one who, with pen or pencil, endeavours to transfer to paper or canvas the likeness of a given object. Almost no one else will draw the object as one sees it one's self. The first inclination is to attribute this variation of vision to that equation of personality upon which the artists so much insist; defining art itself as "life seen through a temperament." It seems a satisfactory solution of the difficulty to credit this variation wholly to deflexion through the angles of individuality; those angles which the psychologists are now so busy analyzing in laboratories in their search for the data required in postulating new interpretations of life. Doubt, however, is cast upon this too sweepingly complete resolution of the difficulty when an attempt is made to obtain a copy of some specific thing. Here stands the concrete object, needing no translation through a temperament; needing nothing more than mere exactitude of reproduc-

tion. Yet experience will show that this accuracy is well-nigh unattainable, even at the hands of those trained to reproduce. It is amazing to find that nine out of ten persons are almost incapable of seeing any object as it really is, even when they may handle and measure it; and that they become annoyed and confused when it is pointed out that they have omitted ornament where it exists, or added it where absent, and ignored demonstrations of the tape-line.

This incapacity for truthful seeing, so surprising in concrete matters, becomes, when applied to questions less tangible, so well-nigh universal as to produce in the observer a peristaltic mental disturbance, resembling the helpless discomfort set up in the interior of a landsman by the violently sudden shifting of the centres of gravity on a plunging ship. Where, then, one asks one's self, must we look for truth? Can we rely upon any assertion outside of the realm of pure mathematics? Talk of worlds unrealized! . . . If others see so vaguely, so inadequately, can we be sure of the truth of any report, any history? Can one trust one's own impressions?

Even this assertion as to common inaccuracy may in its turn be questioned. Yet the records of the psychological laboratories confirm it. Some recent experiments bear interestingly on this very point.

The inner wall of a certain loggia leading to the

class-room of an investigator was pierced by a window. Suddenly questioned as to the appearance of this opening, the greater number of the class, passing the window every day for months, denied its existence. They had never observed it, and were quite confident that it did not exist. But two of the class had noticed it, and only one could describe it with any approach to exactitude.

A more elaborate experiment produced even stranger results. An attendant dressed in a fantastic costume was, without warning, introduced into the class-room. He had been instructed to perform certain antics, to repeat some absurd phrases, and to retire at an agreed signal, after sufficient time had been given to permit every one to examine him clearly. Not only did not one of the class — instructed to record the whole episode immediately in writing — succeed in accurately describing the costume, the gestures, or the words of the unexpected visitor, or the length of his stay in the room, but several of the reports, set down in entire seriousness and good faith, were astoundingly inaccurate in almost every particular. The writers carefully and elaborately described things that had not happened, and remained to the end convinced that they had seen things that had no existence except in their imagination, in spite of assurances to the contrary.

Hic sunt leones! Where are we to put down our feet, if the ground is so quakingly uncertain? Whose word is to be taken on trust?

Documents—is the answer of the Stubbs school of historians. Documents, indeed! Were not those records of the class in psychology documents? And why should the written word be more accurate than the spoken one? It is simply an impression committed to paper.

It is within my own knowledge that in a recent *cause célèbre*, which divided the whole country into two camps, the one witness who knew the facts told nothing but the truth—but not all of it. Had he unbosomed himself of the complete story, the verdict had been reversed, and the public convulsed with scandalized amazement.

The documents of the trial will doubtless be consulted by future historians, and if they be of the Stubbs school, they will be satisfied that their dusty labours have put them in possession of the facts; but lacking all the facts, they will make false history. Some rumour of the truth may reach them, but they will scornfully reject it as mere gossip, unconfirmed by the trustworthy documents.

What is the truth of history? Does any one know? This episode shows how little documents may be relied upon.

Was Lucrezia Borgia the malignant fiend of popular belief? or the helpless pawn of a wicked Pope and his son, escaping eventually to the dignity and peace of life with the d'Estes to develop her natural purity and sweetness? — as later research seems to make probable.

Was Henry VIII a mere selfish tyrant? or the far-seeing benefactor of his country?

Did Anne Boleyn deserve her piteous death upon the scaffold? or was she a helpless innocent devoured by a lecherous minotaur?

Did Mary Stuart murder Darnley and intrigue with Bothwell? or was she a pathetic beauty, used as a shuttlecock to be batted to and fro by unscrupulous Scotchmen?

Who knows? Here are figures set up for the historian to depict, and no two can draw them alike. Not only can we not accept without question statements about the past, but one constantly has one's opinions about contemporary individuals and peoples — opinions formed from hearsay — altered by personal observation and experience.

Americans are told, and most of them accept it without question, that the English are haughty and selfish fellow travellers, and little inclined in their own land to be hospitable to strangers. Many will give chapter and verse of their own adventures in

confirmation. But the experience of one American, extending over many years, is that the most friendly and approachable of all fellow voyagers is invariably a native of "that one small isle set in a silver sea," and that they overflow in their own land with the most ready and ungrudging hospitality.

Whose authority is one to accept — one's own experience or the opinion of others?

It has passed into a sort of axiom that the Irish are witty. One person who has had intimate intercourse with hundreds of Irish people of both sexes, has never heard a Celt say anything intentionally humorous. The older generation, not ground into deadly similarity by the Board Schools, have often a rich savour of speech arising from their quaint choice of words from a language not their mother-tongue. Though they may speak nothing but English, yet English is not the native expression of the genius of the Irish race. They think in Erse or Gaelic forms by the very quality and fibre of their brains, though they may be able to express those forms of thought only in English. Analyzed, I think it will be seen that what seems wit is merely their unexpectedness in the choice and arrangement of words. Their intention is not humorous. The same tang of surprise, and a sort of wild savouriness of speech, is characteristic of the uneducated Ameri-

can negro, who, like the Irish, speaks a language essentially foreign, though he has no other. Like the Irish, the negro is often boisterously gay, but almost never witty by instinct or intention.

Who is it who imposes these traditions? For tradition on any matter has upon all, except the most determinedly open, minds an effect fairly hypnotic. Being told to consider himself a pig, the subject under the spell of the word finds in himself all the essential elements of pork.

The creed of the Higher Pragmatist is an effort to break down this spell. We have been told, it is in effect their attitude, that we can do certain things, and that certain things we cannot do. Let us try whether this be true. Perhaps, says Pragmatism, the conviction that some efforts are beyond our powers is the only barrier which stands between us and their accomplishment. A curious confirmation of their suspicion of unsuspected human potentialities is the fact, known to every swimmer, that so long as we absolutely believe that the water will bear us up, it does bear us up. The moment either fatigue or nervousness undermines this conviction, one sinks like lead.

Long before Pragmatism had arrived at an age to be christened, its startling tenets were adumbrated by the great, but anonymous, author of a Limerick.

A Limerick which in stately measures set forth the most daring effort of the human will.

"There once was a girl who said, 'Why
Can't I look in my ear with my eye?
I'm sure I could do it
If I put my mind to it,
For you never can know till you try.'"

Some physiologists assert that animals can have no ideas because they have no brain-centres of language. One is inclined to infer, from all the available human data, that most men have ideas only because some men have the language to impose notions upon their fellows. Probably at least half of us know things, not because of information from our own perceptions, but because we have received the information — without question — from the words of others.

"In the beginning was the Word . . . and without it was not anything made that was made."

From this it has ensued that words have taken on an element of being — have ceased to exist as mere phrases for the conveyance of opinion, and developed an innate puissance. The idols of wood and stone, to which the heathen in his lamentable blindness bows down, have known a similar transformation. Originally created only as tangible expressions of a conception of dæmonic force, they have set up in business on their own account. Have deflected to

themselves the awe and reverence of their worshippers, who cease to see them as symbols of elementary powers, but rather as objects in themselves to be feared and loved. The shadow of the God grows to be itself a deity; assumes potence, and begins to create man in its own image. This metagenesis of a word, from a halting attempt to express an inadequately realized thought into a fetish for superstitious worship, is common enough. Take, as an example, the word Republican. Originating as a title for a more or less popular form of government, it drew to itself sacred implications that made almost any crime committed in its name look like a virtue. The ship-money that brought Charles Stuart's head to the block was cheerfully paid in double portion to Cromwell, the Republican — a far more rigid tyrant than Charles ever dared to be, and more high-handed with parliaments. The *lettres de cachet* of all the French Louis were fewer in number than the arrests of one week of the Revolutionary tribunals; yet the people of France have less resentment of that Saturnalia of despotism of the mob than of the isolated oppressions of their kings. The Bastille is execrated; the Conciergerie excused. Yet the entire existence of the former saw less suffering, less innocent blood shed, than three months of the latter. The Revolution confiscated more property, cut off more heads,

and wielded a more irresponsible power, than all the monarchs of France put together; yet the former has twenty defenders and apologists where the kings have one. Had any sovereign dared to enact the "hundred-dollar clause" of the American customs, and maintained secret-service spies to worm their way into the confidence of unwary passengers upon incoming ships, his throne would have toppled in a week. Had any European monarch bluntly informed his parliament that it had passed a law in the interest of criminals, and to protect its own members from detection, the mob had stormed his palace within twenty-four hours. But a people having contented themselves with naming their government a republic will find almost any action of their rulers tolerable. The word is an amulet to protect them from tyranny. Take care of the name and the facts will take care of themselves.

Every politician learns early in his career the hypnotic value of the word. Let his mouth be sufficiently full of fine phrases, and his writings breathe noble sentiments, and he may follow his own interests without fear. He knows that to the man in the street words are concrete things, not mere symbols that may or may not represent substance.

"I know he is good, because he says so himself," really expresses the effect of words upon the average

mind. Gladstone astutely grasped this tendency of the crowd, and for half a century dominated the majority of his countrymen. Swayed by the wizardry of his tongue, they saw the shield as either silver or gold, as he directed. When that magic member was stilled, his followers glared about them in a wild surmise, slowly realizing that his golden eloquence had turned to the withered leaves of fairy coin, and that the great figure which had loomed so large and beneficent to their mesmerized senses had shrunk to the stature of a selfish opportunist. American political life could show similar examples of the wielder of the hypnotic word persuading the mob to believe him good and great because he himself assures them of the fact.

It is, by the way, a pleasing proof that the worst of us love and labour after virtue, when one notes that no man could carry the crowd with him who did not lift a flag of lofty moral sentiment. One might almost say of solemn moral sentiment, since the masses always prefer their verbal virtue of a good solid doughy consistency — the unleavened bread of edification, not frivolized by the yeast of humour. The glancing gaiety of wit disturbs their pious confidence. They do not feel that they can safely trust their destinies to one who is restive under platitudes. No humorous statesman has ever

been the idol of the people. Perhaps he has too vivid a sense of proportion to be vain; too keen a sense of realities to take himself with the ponderous seriousness proper to a popular idol.

What a petty creature Cato appears in the intimate letters of his contemporaries, yet his self-righteous attitudinizing still dominates the imagination of posterity through the spell of fine phrases.

Brutus, for two thousand years, made assassination a virtue by the simple device of calling it tyrannicide, and of making an eminently quotable speech about despots as he stabbed his kindest friend in a fury of ignoble jealousy. *Sic semper tyrannis* nerved the hand of Wilkes Booth, and of hundreds of equally unhappy but well-meaning creatures before him and since. Poor wretches, who without that high-sounding sentence to inspire them would doubtless have shrunk from the extreme of murder!

What a welter of futile intrigue and violence was that vaunted liberty of the Florentine republic, which the Medicis are credited with having strangled to feed their own lust of luxury and power. Yet Lorenzo steered the City of the Lilies safely through a period of almost unexampled difficulty, and left taxes lower, and the price of government securities higher, at his death than when he caught the reins of power from the warring hands of the reckless oligarchy who

spouted eternally of republican liberty. He too went forever in fear of the shadow of the prating Brutus —particularly fashionable as exemplar to the classic-drunk Renaissance.

Savonarola, Lorenzo's enemy, was an eminent lover of tumid words and of rotund professions of virtue, yet he too in his turn found the temptations and difficulties of power as great as every other popular idol has done. It is a curious light on Lorenzo's character that he accorded Savonarola complete liberty, though the Medici influence with the Papacy would have made exile or silencing a mere matter of a word. Indeed, not until Lorenzo's death removed the protection he accorded to Savonarola, did the Curia undertake to crush the strenuous Prior.

We have always been told to execrate the Banker-Prince, to reverence the Reformer, yet the facts make one doubt and pause. Was not perhaps Lorenzo the wiser and truer patriot of the two?

"*Prove* all things; hold fast that which is true," warns St. Paul, but how is anything to be proved? "What is truth?" asks Pontius Pilate gravely of the Hebrews who come before his judgement seat; and no one of them can answer his terrible enquiry, though no doubt each was sure he had the root of the matter in him.

"Words, words, words!" cries Hamlet, despair-

ingly. "Wingéd words," the poet calls them, that fly like thistledown, each silver web of pinions carrying a seed of thought in the centre of its fairy feathers, to be sown as chance and the wind wills, and to spring up again in rank and bristling growths.

Jean Jacques Rousseau — a vulgar, selfish sentimentalist, who lived upon the purse of silly women, abandoned the helpless fruits of his passing amours to public charity, and gravely chronicled his petty egregiousnesses for posterity — blew this seeded thistledown through Europe, and with it overthrew laws and thrones.

William Jennings Bryan, an ex-strolling player and briefless attorney, poured forth in a golden voice a majestic borrowed phrase, and millions of his countrymen followed him like sheep for years, though never was one great deed put to his credit.

In spite of all which, men of action speak scornfully of "word-braiders"; think indifferently and contemptuously of literature; yet books outlive rulers and races. Carthage was so great a city that for fifteen hundred years after its fall it was not necessary to quarry stone in Syria. From its ruins a hundred cities have been built, a thousand roads paved. Throughout the Middle Ages, and also prior to them, Carthage was a building quarry for all Islam, and much of Christendom. The Arabian geographer,

Edrisi, says that in his time no vessel left Tunis without some marble plunder from Carthage. The whole city of Tunis is built from it, and every town on the African coast of the Mediterranean has stolen stone from "Kart-Hadast." Southern Italy, Sicily, and Corsica looted building-stuff from its site for centuries, and the Cathedral at Pisa was fashioned of material taken from the Punic temples. Even yet the smaller fragments of its masonry form a layer from twelve to fifteen feet deep above the spot once occupied by half a million merchants.

Of this enormous civilization only its wide-flung stones remain. Of it we know almost nothing. Its life counts for nothing in our lives, yet the literature of a little semi-nomad Semitic tribe is as living to-day as when it was written. That literature has moulded the arts, the polity, the thoughts, the very structure of the brains of all Europe. Half the deeds of the Occident for the last two thousand years have had their germ and impulse from the words of Hebrew word-braiders.

Troy town is as the dream of a dream, but Homer's book keeps its folk forever immortal through the sheer potency of words.

Whatever is done by man is soon forgotten, if no bard makes a story of it; fitting, filing, shifting, matching words. And in making his story, his verbal

picture, he may, and generally does, feel considerably greater concern as to its being a good story, a fine picture, than an accurate record; yet once made, it is through his eyes that we see the deed forever.

These obscure, ignored, usually indigent little word-smiths sit in dingy corners hammering out their phrases, while destruction and reconstruction roar about them unheeded. If, however, one stopped to contemplate those unimportant-seeming labours with observant eyes, it would be obvious that they were really engaged in fashioning mankind. It would be seen that out of these small booths had come the impressions and impulses that were pushing and pulling the loud mob making history outside. It would be seen that here were being laid the eggs from which were to be hatched future heroisms and murders, future wars and migrations; that this was the soil in which was germinating the seed of the convictions and aspirations of generations still inconceivably remote in the future. The philosophical student of these shabby artisans would perceive that, though they as often wrote false as true, their pens were indubitably mightier than all the blades ever forged by the armourers of Toledo or Damascus.

XI

MR. SLUDGE, THE MEDIUM

SOME ten years since, as the nineteenth century was nearing its close, I took occasion to put forth some speculations as to the nature of the Time-Spirit of the coming era. These could by no chance be more than speculations, for at that moment the manifestations of the *Zeitgeist* were still too vague and inchoate to lend themselves to prophecy. One generation, or one century, melts so imperceptibly into another, that it is difficult to draw a line clearly between them, since, before the passing one has wholly passed, the new one is itself tending toward its close. Yet each generation feels a new impulse; differs as does the child from the parent, and each century essays a new solution of the problem of life.

The pendulum of the ages swings across a fixed parabola, but so great is the arc that it requires a period of twice fifty years to cross the spaces dividing one extreme of human tendency from the other. No sooner has this pendulum reached the limit of its rise than all the forces of reaction combine to

drag it back toward the opposite ultimate. Yet the segment of the circle across which it moves is so large, the movement itself so slow, we are always unable to mark the moment at which it pauses to begin its backward journey. Only the perspective of history enables us accurately to time the enormous oscillations of the human spirit, swinging back and forth in its effort to attain the point of happiness.

It, alas! never does quite reach the hoped-for goal. Those who push it in one direction are convinced they might eventually touch the desired point, were it not for the gravitation of reactionaries. Always at the very verge of reaching it, the thrust in the opposite direction becomes irresistible, and they must perforce yield, to become reactionaries in their turn.

Looking only so far back as the seventeenth century, one sees the impulse toward individualism cutting off the head of a king in England, breaking the great nobles in France and Russia, developing a republic in Holland, and thinkers everywhere revolting against the intellectual tyranny of the Church. Then the backward swing begins, and the dominant push in the eighteenth century is toward the solidarity of society regulated by authority. As this impulse reaches its apogee, the pendulum is caught once

more by the hands of the individualists, and all through the nineteenth century is urged further and further in the opposite direction.

We who were bred in the tenets of that nineteenth century scarcely doubted that the logic of our doctrines was so irrefutable that all opposition must finally give way before it. Only now are we awaking to the fact that the chronometry of the human spirit knows no change, and that the propulsion toward the other experiment must in turn have its way.

The tick of time demands that the great opposite century swing should now begin. So we are passing in this twentieth epoch of our era to a new adventure in authority. That this authority is called socialism, that its brow is not bound with a jewelled circlet, in no way alters its real character. The theory is still the same — of the individual will subjected to the desired benefit of the whole body.

The past century argued that if each were blest, the whole — being but individuals in the aggregate — must perforce be content. The theory of the new generation is that if the whole be benefited, the individual — being but a component of the whole — must find satisfaction.

Mark the delightful similarity of the difference between Tweedle-dum and Tweedle-dee!

Either one of these hypotheses of happiness might be turned into a condition were it not for "the Other Fellow"—that wrong-headed person, who is always opposed to the practical demonstration of our theory. No matter how clearly it is explained to him, how luminously it is shown to be supremely desirable that he should accept our opinion as a way out of all difficulties, he remains stupidly unconvinced. In the most tiresome fashion he responds to crystal-clear exegesis by setting up counter-theories of his own. Theories that would not appeal to the intellect of a child; how much less worthy of the attention of one really intent upon regenerating society! It is he who blocks and delays all progress. He it is who holds back the millennium; and just as one is on the point of pushing Time's pendulum beyond the fatal line of reaction, he brutally throws his whole weight upon it, forcing it again to its long lamentable swing in the wrong direction. If he were once eliminated, bringing back the Golden Age would be a task almost absurdly simple. Naturally, it is one's plain duty to oppose him tooth and nail. To confute with all one's might his fantastic plans for the general welfare; which would obviously not be welfare at all, so entirely are they opposed to all one's own natural needs and wishes.

Reducing it to the individual life, the same dis-

tressing element of the Other Fellow confuses all the smoothness of existence. How easy it were to be good, to be gay, to be amiable, efficient, and happy, with the Other Fellow eliminated! He has a congenital inability to see eye for eye with us. His mood never fits our own. He desires things cold that should obviously be hot. He suffers from the most dreary notions of what is amusing, wise, or desirable. He misinterprets one's noblest intentions, opposes one's most unselfish efforts, and continually rouses all one's righteous antagonisms by his mistaken views and actions. Could one be properly understood and seconded, how beautiful life might be! Instead, we are forced, against our will, to fight aggression with aggression; self-seeking with self-protection; misconception with resentment.

It is this difference of temperament, of our manner of envisaging life, that makes the Golden Rule so inadequate a law of being. To do unto others as we would they should do unto us is the most acceptable of maxims to a generous heart. It is delicious to do what seems good to us. Only, alas! what we would have done to *us* seems anything but good to the Other Fellow. Far more difficult is the rule, "Do unto others what *they* would have you do unto them." That is a counsel of perfection requiring almost

superhuman selflessness; demanding a delicacy of sympathy possible only to the clairvoyance of a perfect love.

The Other Fellow has command of the pendulum just now. He is dragging it out of our hands toward a new experiment in authority. For the theory of socialism is not democratic; its whole tendency is autocratic. We of the individualistic persuasion have not proved the perfection of our plan. The individual has shown that, left to uncurbed expansion, he may bear hardly upon whole classes of individuals. We feel, secretly, that the fault is entirely with that other class. If it were not feckless, idle, incompetent, and constantly yearning for some miracle to relieve it of the need for alertness, energy, and self-reliance, it would see how admirable the present conditions are; and we stand despairingly by as we watch the whole fabric of democracy and individual freedom, which we so sweated and laboured to perfect, slowly being undone by the Other Fellow, for whose character and views we feel unutterable contempt.

"Let all these weaklings and malingerers," — we say bitterly, — "these envious, lazy 'have-nots,' try the old game for a while. Let them search for a Northwest Passage to happiness. Let them imagine a vain thing of government which, by mere wizardry,

is to make it possible for something to be created out of nothing; is to give the maximum of well-being for a minimum of effort. It can't be done, of course; but let them try — the fools! Let them go clamouring after loud-mouthed demagogues, who find their political fortunes in abusing us. The demagogues will ride them harder than ever we did."

Naturally, a decent sense of citizenship obliges us to throw our weight against the present trend of events, until, as is highly probable, by the end of another century the exhausted energies of our antagonists will yield in turn to our own efforts.

This alternation of cycle and epicycle can be traced and predicated like isothermal lines and barometric changes. The strong, the practical, and the optimistic, finding human affairs in a melancholy welter, roll up their sleeves and begin to set matters in order, dealing with them in practical and concrete fashion. They sweep away theories, discard dreams, and place conditions on "a business basis." In such a cycle the practical and efficient climb to the top, bestride the feebler multitude, and, intoxicated with their own power, begin to tyrannize.

Then the less efficient grow restive; criticize the whole polity of the times, and ponder changes which will equalize the humble and the great, the efficient and the inefficient.

The more ingenious conceive a plan for inevitably righting all wrongs, readjusting all inequalities, and ensuring universal happiness. This plan gradually leavens the minds of the mass, and the power of the rulers begins to rock upon the surge of inferior discontent. For no matter how strong a man be, a hundred weak men are still stronger. This is the opportunity of ambitious adventurers ready to fish in troubled waters; finding their opportunity in utilizing unrest. They are but the strong again, masquerading as the friends of the feeble. In their skilful hands the dreams are directed and made a lever, and the old round once more repeats itself. The strong who have led it to this point again bestride the vague, bewildered multitude, until it once more becomes restive to the point of trying still a new attempt at universal well-being.

All that is now claimed for socialism was claimed a century ago for democracy, and doubtless the ambitious will use socialism for their own purposes as the strong and the loud-voiced bent that older panacea to their own uses. Justice and liberty, fraternity and equal opportunity, and the rights of the humble, were shibboleths then as now. Then as now the virtuous dreamers with shining eyes saw in the new prescription a cure for all the ills of life. A century ago the gentle souls allowed themselves to be angry

and contemptuous with those who predicted *que plus ça change plus c'est le même chose.*

As a perhaps necessary concomitant of the social unrest — this effort to reach results not by the tedious methods of natural evolution, but by the magic of a formula — there has arisen a new interest in the occult and the supernatural. The same phenomena accompanied the early growth of the democratic experiment. Cagliostro and Mesmer, and many less famous imitators, exploited supernormal signs and wonders; convincing gaping crowds of their miraculous enfranchisement from nature, or of their discovery of scientific laws that were more nearly scientific anarchy. Cagliostro's mummeries seem dreary *vieux jeux* to us now, but were really no more fantastic than those of his Baboo successors, who simply remove their origin a few degrees of longitude further to the East. Mesmer's claims are copied and imitated to-day by fat, placid old fakirs, who form classes of idle ladies to study the vibration of "blue waves." Vibrations by whose means these ladies hope to evade the results of imprudent eating, or to daunt the encroachment of that "middle-aged spread" which makes the revived Empire fashions a sight to draw tears from the angels.

"Mr. Sludge, the Medium" has, however, the front rank among contemporary impostors. Socie-

ties are founded to study his most banal attempts at deception; the members of which societies display so persistent and passionate a determination to be gulled as must earn the scornful wonder of the male and female Sludge, who can but wish at times for sufficient incredulity to make their mystifications more flattering to their own sense of skill. However he or she may bungle and stammer, 't is, —

> "'Just as you thought, much as you might expect!
> There be more things in heaven and earth, Horatio! . . .
> And so on. Shall not David take the hint,
> Grow bolder, stroke you down at quickened rate?
> If he ruffle a feather, it's 'Gently, patiently!
> Manifestations are so weak at first!
> Doubting, moreover, kills them, cuts all short!'
> . . . . . .
> So David holds the circle, rules the roast,
> Narrates the vision, peeps in the glass ball,
> Sets-to the spirit-writing, hears the raps,
> As the case may be."

There is an almost pathetic quality in the confessions of these earnest investigators — confessions so often published in the ladies' fashion journals. They particularize their enormous precautions against fraud, and then artlessly, a few paragraphs further on, relate that Little Bright Eyes, or Little Sunshine, the control, begged them squeakily to move further away, so close a contiguity being bad

for the medium. After which the same old banjo floats in the air; the same old clammy hand lays itself unpleasantly upon the believer's neck.

What is most remarkable to the outsider is the lack of vivacious originality in the spirit-world. Why always a banjo or tambourine? Why not a floating piano sometimes? That would be really remarkable. Why always that lamentable vagueness about conditions on "the other side"? Why, after all those thrills and tremors, and low lights, is the revelation rarely more valuable than the information that the dear late Uncle Jacob's missing blue cotton umbrella may be found in the east gable of the garret?

One feels that if one "passed over" one's self and was allowed to be a "control," one could make séances more lively and entertaining by far. And why must all controls be Little Sunshines lisping baby talk, or Indian chiefs using a pigeon-English which would be scorned by the most degraded Digger? Why never Little Buttercup, or an Arab chief—just for a change?

My own first experience with a medium introduced me to that overworked Indian spirit. The medium — a large, soft, dingy lady breathing a mingled aroma of onions and crumbs — explained that the noble savage who spoke by her lips endeavoured to indicate houses, when he used the term "lodges";

That "wampum" stood in his simple barbaric vocabulary for money; and that "chiefs" was his artless ungrammatic synonym for the male sex. Whereupon she fell into rigours, and Lo the poor Indian poured forth a stream of broken-English generalities, in which all nouns were tagged with "ums." After prophesying my future possession of much wampum, my sojourn in many lodges, and the friendship of many chiefs, he suddenly wound up with the startling advice, "but don't you trust no chief-ums, cause chief-ums *they's all hell-ums!*"

The best proof of the persistency of the type, of the dreary lack of inventiveness among the mediums, is Browning's "Mr. Sludge, 'the Medium'"; that terrible soul analysis of David Home, written more than half a century ago. The whole bag of tricks is already there.

A delightful experience, in which I have frequently indulged myself, is to let the medium draw from one's self all his astonishing information — only ensuring that what he draws shall be false. Seeing that their business is to trade on human credulity, it is in its way touching to observe how invariably they fall into this trap. To see how they will welter in banal generalities until they catch the false clue casually let drop, and how skilfully they will spin the invented thread whose end has been handed

out to them. They grow more exact and authoritative with every gasp of surprise at the accuracy of their carefully supplied knowledge. The light in their eyes is an interesting side-light upon human nature, as one thanks them warmly for their astounding knowledge of the life and character of the Uncle Jacob whose existence one invented in the course of the sitting.

Between myself and various mediums that mythical Uncle Jacob has had some startling adventures, and has been "shown up" in the most conflicting lights. I am, at times, very nearly convinced there must really have been an Uncle Jacob, so intimate an acquaintance have I acquired with my old relative (on the mother's side) since he passed from non-existence here to so vivid an actuality in the spirit-world. I have developed an almost filial affection for my aged kinsman, and profoundly respect the retentiveness of his memory for events that never took place. Many persons have tenacious recollection of real happenings, but no lapse of time, or subtilization of substance, ever causes Uncle Jacob to forget a detail of the incidents which I have conceived on the spur of the moment.

This, as a medium-test, is far superior to cords, sealing-wax, or postage-stamps; and so far, at least in my experience, has never been known to fail.

And yet, despite the dull trickery and commonplace, despite the bald dreariness of the flabby twaddle which is the sum of what one receives from the spirit-world, there is *something* which one cannot dismiss with unreflecting contempt.

As Sludge himself says at the end of his confession: —

> "I cheated when I could,
> Rapped with my toe-joints, set sham hands at work,
> Wrote down names weak in sympathetic ink,
> Rubbed odic lights with ends of phospher-match,
> And all the rest; . . . believe this,
> . . . . . .
> This trade of mine — I don't know, can't be sure
> But there was something in it, tricks and all."

It is certain, fallible as is human testimony, that thousands of men through thousands of years do not persistently lie. And so many have testified to events not explicable by natural laws — as we know them, that it seems credible that events do occur, not explicable by natural laws — as we know them. Many strange appearances, of course, are so explicable, were they properly investigated. My one experience of the ghostly proved, on examination, to have an absurdly simple explanation. Yet the cause of the strange appearance, simple as that cause was, not the most ingenious of minds could have divined. Had it remained uninvestigated, the tale would have

been held as a mere lying invention, by those incredulous of marvels. Yet I did see the strange happenings, resulting merely from an angry beetle and from a curious balance of forces that might not occur once in a thousand years; and having discovered the origin of this phenomenon, I am indulgently allowed to be accurately relating an actual fact. No doubt many of the startling stories told, and disbelieved, are entirely truthful descriptions of real occurrences, and have equally simple and obscure causes.

Yet after having written off all the incidents and coincidences imperfectly realized, there remains a residuum of occurrences which demand other explanation. It is not too much to suppose that there are many natural laws as yet unknown to us, nor to suppose that these inexplicabilities are simply flashes out of the unknown; as many electrical manifestations must have puzzled observers — and cruelly blighted their reputation for veracity — before we learned some of the laws of the most prodigious and subtle force yet within our ken. That we still move about in worlds unrealized, the discoveries of every year more fully testify. How unescapable it was, for example, to attribute to divine wrath all violent and deadly epidemics before science had entered the field of bacteriology. How else was one to explain a sudden blight for which no cause could be discovered?

Now that microscopes have made us free of the privacies of the invisible, the thrill and terror of such visitations attenuates itself to a mere reproachful scolding of the local Health Board. Microbes have swum within the ken of natural law, and must submit to police regulation like the rest of us. We can now hear, and credit, with perfect calmness, the otherwise terrifying news that the average healthy mouth contains more inhabitants than the kingdom of Holland. What difference if it does? We know that these creatures, like ourselves, are subject to a fixed and intelligible code. It is only the unknown and unregulated which is disturbing. One may cheerfully, nay, amusedly, look at one's own skeleton, having some idea of the action of the X-ray. How it would crisp the human spirit thus to see its solid flesh melt into transparence, were the manner of the process of such seeing still wrapped in mystery! The prodigies of radium still attend codifying and explaining, but we await its marvels and potencies placidly, knowing that its subtleties are still within the realm of matter, and that all matter is subject to law.

The terror of the supernatural has its base in the natural horror of the material brought face to face with the immaterial; with a vague inchoate something which seems to know no law. Our existence

being substantially in three dimensions, we have the agonizing sensation of stepping off into thin air when confronted with entities which appear to move in a fourth. And yet, after all, why should we so tremble, since science is showing us almost every day substances to which what is called matter presents no barriers? is showing us forces against which the clenched cohesion of hammered steel is as loose woven as muslin, — rays to which our compact flesh is as open-meshed as a fish-net?

The test of our senses we know to be the roughest and clumsiest of mensurations. The ultra-violet rays we are aware of, though invisible. The undertones and overtones beyond our scale we cannot hear, though we can measure their vibrations. We cannot smell the thousand odours palpable to our dogs; nor hear the earth-worm working in the ground, as a robin can. And is it not possible that the thunders of cannon are inaudible overtones to a robin?

Our ghostly phenomena are merely phenomena whose laws are still unknown to us; vibrations to whose waves we have not yet applied the measurements of mathematics.

Many of the miracles of the hagiologists — so potent a cause of gaping wonder to believers, of scornful incredulity to scoffers — we now know to have been

real happenings, and perfectly within the limits of the possible. The stigmata of St. Francis is a commonplace of the students of hysteria. The haloes of the saints really were haloes and not pious imagination. Benvenuto Cellini saw one about his own wicked head; others have seen the same miracle, which is now understood as a curious effect of light following fixed and natural laws.

Looked at rightly, a photograph is as much a miracle as the "materialization" of the mediums.

> "This is her picture as she was!
> It seems a thing to wonder on,
> As though mine image in the glass
> Should linger when myself am gone."

That the sun should record in a mere instant of time, on glass, or films of gelatine, the exact lineaments of a human being,—including the subtle something that is personality,—and that this record should remain fixed for years, is as wonderful as "though mine image in the glass should linger when myself am gone." That this wonder does not stir us is because we know the laws governing it. We would be thrown into an agony of amazement did a fakir produce it for the first time as a full-blown miracle from his bag of tricks — we all ignorant of its mechanism.

All that we now know as the supernatural daunts

us only because of its apparent lawlessness. We tremble before elements whose powers for evil we cannot gauge, nor guess at the wild caprices that may inspire the actions of those forces. Once reduce them to rule and they become commonplace, and we indifferent.

All these absurd passagings and excursions of the tamperers with the mystic have yet their value, since they may be like those in the Western Islands who found strange flotsam on the beach, and from them inferred America. Some navigator may be even now turning over these rude carvings and drifting boughs, and slowly planning a daring Columbian voyage into the unknown. The Pragmatists, as I have said, suggest that we do not yet guess at our real mental, physical, and moral possibilities. That within us may lie untested potencies. The swimmer knows that, as long as he *thinks* the water can bear him up, it does bear him up. When he loses that confidence, he sinks. Perhaps we allow ourselves to be daunted too greatly by our fear of gravitation, by our experience of ponderability, of cohesion. Perhaps will, and belief, will help us to burst their erstwhile iron bonds. The child with no experience of danger will dare and accomplish what the older spirit trembles to attempt. It stirs the soul to picture some great navigator setting sail from the shores of

the familiar, across the uncharted deeps, to round the globe of cognition, and find a great new land of knowledge and power.

> "Come, my friends,
> 'T is not too late to seek a newer world;
> Push off, and sitting well in order smite
> The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
> To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
> Of all the Western stars, until I die.
> It may be that the gulfs shall wash us down;
> It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
> And see the great Achilles, whom we knew."

XII

"UPON MAKING THE MOST OF LIFE"

TO read a book by Vernon Lee is to receive an impression such as one experiences upon making for the first time a visit in a beautiful room. The earliest sensation is a general one of quiet charm, of soft colours, of clear, sweet spaces of light and air. But as one lingers in this soothing atmosphere of agreeableness, the eye gradually discerns that the room is full of delightful and valuable objects, whose individual importance had been blended with — had indeed in sum composed — the delicate harmony of the chamber.

The pleasantest fact of the visit will be, however, — if one be of a somewhat greedy mental temperament, — that upon one's admiring such of the treasures as most appeal to one's taste, the hostess immediately presents them to her guest, after the high tradition — rather than the practice — of ancient Spanish courtesy. And having brought them home, these gifts seem even more desirable than they appeared in their original fine setting. For the benefaction — whether it be a picture of some soft, twilit

landscape, an outline of the head of an old Tuscan peasant, or some seed of abstract thought — becomes, by the graciousness and completeness of the gift, a part of one's own mental furnishing, or else a germ of ideas that in a new soil quickly grows new shoots and branches, and puts forth flowers of new colour and feeling to perfume and irradiate one's own garden. It is indeed the special beneficence of strong and creative minds, that they fertilize and develop into definite growth the soil of other intelligences.

Making one of these agreeable visits within the covers of "Hors Vitæ," I brought away — along with an armload of other pleasant gifts — two quotations from "The Praise of Courtship," which were like the title and colophon of an essay upon one of the vexedest puzzles of human life. The first was Rochefoucauld's saying, — "Il y a de bons marriages, mais point de delicieux." The other was an expression employed by a certain sister after nursing a small brother through a difficult illness. "We were always Castilian," she said.

The two sayings fitted one another like a question and its answer; like a riddle and its solution. For between that assertion and suggestion lies the meaning of one of the heaviest failures of the average human life.

Why — even when the lives are good — do they so rarely manage to be *delicieux?* Not in marriage alone, but in most of our human ties? Most of us begin with the intention that they shall be delicious; that not through our fault shall they fail of being not only the sound, wholesome bread of life, but that the bread shall be spread with bland butter and dipped into honeyed sweetness. We are quite determined it shall be a meal upon which our whole nature shall feed with perfect pleasure and content. And after the passage of time we, almost without exception, painfully realize that our food is hard, tasteless, and dry; and is to be got down at all only by the aid of the salt of humour, or the moisture of tears.

Yet so many relations are delicious in the beginning, and so promising of steadfastness in delight. — The relation of parent and child: protecting and unselfish on one side, confiding and clinging on the other. Or the relation of brothers and sisters: full of cheerful comradeship, sympathetic tastes, and the strong bond of common experiences and interests. Of teacher and pupil; of friend and friend; exploring new fields of thought together, or the pleasant surprises of each other's minds. More than all are the relations of lovers and the newly married delicious to poignancy: full of almost breathlessly joyous discoveries of mutual tendernesses and beauties

of person and character; with, underneath, the soul-satisfying sense that here at last is a possession quite of one's own; a possession no one else has a right to share or dispute.

Why should the light of common day drink the dewy freshness from all of these, leaving them arid and faded, so that even the most wilful blindness of heart cannot persuade one of their continued deliciousness?

The tired and disappointed eye will turn enviously upon a few rare companionships which, while letting the spring flowers pass unprotestingly, set the gardens of their mutual relations with the satisfactory replacements of gay, hardy autumn blooms and savoury herbs, whose bright colours and pungent odours make the place still a spot of content and beauty. Why, one asks one's self forlornly, should my enclosure be bare of all charm and sweetness? Why should it be but a dusty, beaten plaza for the hurried passageway of indifferent feet, instead of a Paradise where, even in the cool of the day, the god of love should still walk? A region

> "Where branchéd thoughts, now grown with pleasant pain,
> Instead of pines shall murmur in the wind —
> And in the midst of this wide quietness
> A rosy sanctuary I will dress

With the wreathed trellis of a working brain,
With buds and bells, and stars without a name,
With all the Gardener Fancy e'er could feign,
Who, breeding flowers, will never breed the same;
And there should be for thee all soft delight
That shadowy thought can win,
A bright torch, and a casement ope at night
To let the warm Love in!"

The unintrospective, unanalytical mind explains the difficulty as the mere cooling and hardening of age, but a doubt arises sometimes whether there be such a thing as age of the spirit. That is to say, is age an innate change, or a condition imposed from without? Is one old because one looks at one's self from a different angle, or is the condition of mind superinduced by the angle from which one is regarded by others? A woman of fifty once shyly confessed that she herself was still ready to dance all night with the same enthusiasm she had known at sixteen, but added sadly that the joy of the measured rhythm of activity must be a dual joy, and that no one wanted to dance all night with one who was grey-haired. Who knows what similar instincts of gay abandon may not pulse behind the dull faces, within the bald heads, of stout-waisted parents sleepily propping the walls, while their laughing offspring decline to catch a protesting eye as they start upon one more musical romp in the small hours of the morning?

Admitting that they have had their day, that they must make way for the newcomers, is it yet to be accepted without question that there is to be no more deliciousness for those who linger at life's feast? Dancing may be abandoned without undue reluctance, but are all the pleasant adventures and relations of the soul to be foregone while the sun is still but halfway down the slope? That the pleasantness is burned out early in the afternoon is lamentably common. Most of the apparently cheerful bearers of the burden of middle age would admit — could they be induced to speak the whole truth — that for them existence had narrowed down to such grey satisfaction as is to be found in the performance of obvious duties, and that the word "deliciousness" had now scarcely a meaning for their dulled memories, their flagging relish of life.

In moments of the sad *éclaircissement* of solitary meditation, when we turn aside from ordinary occupations to reckon up our meagre remnant of treasures from a store once so ample, we wonder what it is we have done, or left undone, to have so shrunk our fortunes of happiness. Why has our property not been put out at interest, so that it should have grown instead of diminishing? We should be richer, instead of poorer, for the accumulations of the passing years. Nearer and deeper

ties should bind us for each twelve-month we have lived with those we loved. Closer and closer should we have been interlaced by subtle tendrils nourished and watered by the tears we have shed together, by mutual feasts and jests, common labours and interests. New friends should have multiplied, and our children and theirs should have been built into the pattern of life, to have made it always richer and more varied.

Whose fault is it that it is not so? Very few of us are prepared to admit that the fault was wholly our own. On casual examination it seems very plain that it was the fault of our fellows. We remember the confiding, reverent, unquestioning love we bore our parents; but they, who up to a certain point had been all unselfish devotion, suddenly seemed to be quite transformed. Just as we were growing ready to take our part in life they found our friends tedious, or undesirable; they were contemptuous or indifferent of our most passionate ambitions and desires; they distrusted our powers, and repressed and chilled our warmest enthusiasms. Having brought us to the gate of the world of men, they seemed suddenly reluctant to let us through, and stood there, hesitating and discouraging us, with their hands on the latch, until we were obliged to push past them — a little hastily, just a thought

rudely, perhaps — if we were ever to enter at all. Upon which they fell back with an air of wounded affection which put us at fault, set us awkwardly on the defensive, so that we could no longer run to them to be comforted for all our small wounds, to brag of our triumphs, to confide our plans. And so year by year they drew further away from us, and we never quite got over our resentful awkwardness, and all that old sweetness, — so dear, so intimate in childhood, — which we had meant to keep all our lives, died away into mere abnegation of claim on one side, into respectful dutifulness on the other.

As for one's sisters and brothers: were there ever such delightful boys, such lovely girls? Nobody else's brothers could jump so high, or throw so far, or were so quick at lessons. No other fellow's sisters had such long curls, or such jolly ways. There came tiffs of course, but aware underneath of the staunch fondness, the falling out of such faithful friends was renewing still of love.

The warm, deep sense of strength that loyal comradeship gave! always ready to take our side against the rest of mankind; full of uncritical readiness to believe us in the right of every matter. How those kind eyes warmed the world for us! How pleasant to be surrounded by those to whom one could

say, "Don't you remember?" Why remember the tumbles downstairs, the fight behind the schoolhouse, the cat with six toes, the tricks of the grey collie. All those pleasant and amusing recollections, banal to the stupid outsiders, but full of intimate zest for us.

Certainly it was not one's fault that *that* relationship grew cold. Jim lived on the other side of the world, and seemed not to care to write; and Dick, like most men who married, had become so absorbed in his wife's side of the family that he was almost like a stranger. And Mary, who married a soldier, was always rushing off to the ends of the earth, dragging a lot of half-trained children along, so that one never had a chance at her, except intermittently, and then in a noisy turmoil of uncomfortable brats. As for Jessie, she had become so absorbed in slum work and sociological questions — such a gay tomboy as she used to be, too! — that one could n't get any real companionship from *her;* besides, she never seemed to hit it off with Rosamund, somehow.

Well — there it was! All that dear fellowship separated and lost. Was that one's fault, I ask you?

As for Rosamund — poor Rosamund! It could n't be said she was really to blame; and yet when one remembered that dimpled, wilful, bewitching Rosa-

mund whom one loved with a passion that was an exquisite pain — whom each day made always more and more adorable, so that one was half frightened to think how time and the years would render her so dear and dearer all the while that one would be robbed of one's manhood by sheer uxoriousness. . . .

Of course it was nobody's fault that her long illness after the twins came should have left her thin and bloodless, and gradually transformed her into a fretful, self-absorbed valetudinarian; making of her a duty to be borne with patience and pity, instead of a woman to be worshipped as the Eternal Feminine leading one upward and onward.

As for the twins — Well, they seemed, unfortunately, to have inherited Rosamund's tenacity of will. One would make any sacrifice for them, of course; and of course one loved them more than anything in the world, but it does seem a little strange that after years of parental devotion they should be so reluctant to accept the advice of older and wiser persons as to which are desirable companions for them, and which are not. Strange that they, so young and inexperienced, should be so impertinently cocksure about their own paths in life; so ready to push away a guiding hand. No doubt one is a fool to expect any real gratitude or affection from one's children!

This, or something like this, is the quotient of most of these reckonings up of the barren, savourless life of the middle-aged heart.

> "As I came through the Desert thus it was,
> As I came through the Desert — "

Delicious? — what cruel irony! One can only draw one's breath hard, and go on with a sort of grey courage till the curtain comes down on a play whose last act is dull and disappointing.

And yet — and yet — those others; those few others — they carried on triumphantly until the end. What was their secret?

They went to the very end with their parents, delicately readjusting their attitude until it was they who protected and judged, the parents who clung and trusted. They kept the childish comradeship warm and close through all mutations. In marriage they remained absurd, delightful lovers till the golden-wedding day; and finally their children laid them in the grave with an agony of regret rarer than is admitted. There was some magic in it. Of course there were not many like this — most of the world was just like ourselves, and no one kept all the ties perfect; but to preserve even one relation *delicieux* is sufficient to make life worth living.

Knowing, as we all do know in the last analysis, that it is only the human affections which can pre-

serve the flavour of existence for us, the wonder is that we are so careless of our treasures. Riches, honour, fame, even labour, all pall at last, but a perfect love, perfectly given and perfectly returned, knows no satiety, no flagging of joy — having its roots in the deepest primitive depths of being. For to be indispensable to some one means a more certain foothold in the struggle for survival; it means that to our own effort to live is added the passionate effort of others, which in moments of stress may contribute just the needed power that will enable us to breast the flood which otherwise might drag us down. Not that love calculates thus coldly, but that from the satisfaction of these fundamental unrealized needs springs the warm courage and peace that love gives. It is the relaxing of these strong, clinging ties, this chilling of the insistent claims of affection, that makes the lonely bleakness of age. No one needs us, or holds to us; and we feel a blank creeping terror of defencelessness. Love, that flings itself madly between youth and death, stands usually respectfully unprotesting when age drifts out into the darkness.

This being so, — Life needing Love more profoundly than all things else, — why is it that the science of the affections remains always in its infancy? All the other sciences go forward in leaps

of progress. Passionate patience, exquisite subtilty, incredible genius are placed at the service of biology, chemistry, astronomy, — but who gives even a moment of labour to "amology"? The whole subject is unanalyzed, is left to chance; with resultant ignorance and chaos. Some few arrive at the desired end by divine intuition, but they cannot instruct their helpless fellows, since inspiration is difficult to convey. Psychologists, who might well devote their initial efforts to such practical ends, waste energy on table-rappings and spook-hunts while the delicate flowers of the human spirit wither neglected in an untilled, unwatered soil.

"We were always Castilian." That sounds as if it were the key to the science of love. In other words, we practised the imagination of the heart. We stepped delicately along the space set apart for the feet, not blundering across the blossoms like an unwhipped puppy, unable to differentiate between the permitted paths and the formal reservations of the flowery spaces of the soul. We observed the manners of the spirit, and its code imposes not only respect for the reserves of others, but profound reserves of our own.

This is a hard saying for the underbred heart to whom comfort in love, as in body, implies relaxation from restraint. Which finds its pleasure in sprawling in uncorseted ease in the presence of its intimates,

reserving formalities for the indifferent and the stranger. Vulgarity resents the constraint and effort of giving daily of its best to its life's companions. It prefers — so to speak — to dine in its shirt-sleeves in the kitchen with its own, and entertains only casual callers in the chilly best room, where the choicest belongings of the mind grow dull and musty for lack of use.

Undoubtedly it is a strain to be forever *en tenue*, to practise all day and every day the high courtesies of affection; but it is exactly this being always Castilian which is the price of the relation that is *delicieux*. Nothing so frays the bonds of love as the bad manners of the heart — the small brutalities which, forgiven in detail, mount through the years to a monstrous sum, to be repaid only by resentment or indifference. The spiritually underbred are not only restive under this demand for perpetual civility, they are awkward and roughly impatient with continual fine manners on the part of their associates, and though careless of the demands of the amenities of the soul, they resent their contemptuous exclusion from the courts and palaces of love.

There must be some system of reciprocity in amity. Some accepted *mot de famille*, exacting exchange of goods in a more or less honest ratio of

return for value received. The deepest heart cannot forever give of its bright springs to an arid soil where no green thing puts forth to show its response to the living waters. Love cannot live if it never sees its own face glassed in another's eyes. The finest-mannered grandee of Castile cannot exist for long at his best among boors. He must seek his equals, to be perfectly Castilian.

The existence of retribution has been always recognized in the commercial world, where no successful enterprise is conducted without persistent attention to detail, without imaginative effort to understand and meet the desires, the needs, and the prejudices of the public. Failure, it is accepted, is the inevitable result of stupidity, indolence, wilfulness, and waste; yet the heart still wonders when indulgence in the same vices ensures bankruptcy on the Exchange of Love.

XIII

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF PAIN

ORMUZD and Ahriman — Good and Evil — Pleasure and Pain! — Broad antitheses that have always been recognized, — that have formed the cornerstones of all religions, the ovum of myths, the study of moralists, the subject of philosophies. But in good truth, were the opposition of these two extremes so complete, their boundaries as clearly defined as one carelessly supposes, the "Riddle of the Universe" would have been so easily soluble that the riddle's answer should long ago have become a mere household proverb, or the banal refrain of children's nursery jingles.

As a matter of fact, the real vexation and puzzle of existence is to define clearly the end of one and the beginning of another; to map out their wavering, shadowy frontiers; to set up guide-posts that shall plainly indicate the desired path to the human wayfarer; keep his feet from these treacherous morasses that look so like green pastures.

Roughly speaking, pain is considered an evil, pleasure a good. Conversely, evil will produce pain;

out of good springs pleasure. Apparently, all the efforts of humanity are bent toward minimizing the sources of suffering, toward increasing the sum of pleasure. And if pain were really so dreaded and avoided as we have the habit of believing, the task of lightening mankind's burdens would be far simpler than any philanthropist has yet found it. But differentiation between suffering and joy is not so easy as would at first appear. The world is by no means of one mind in its definition of good and evil — as witness the proverb that all agreeable things are indigestible, expensive, or immoral.

Leaving aside for the moment the lines of morality, with their baffling interlacings of pleasure productive of suffering, and anguish out of which grows joy, to take only the question of physical distress, — which it would seem men would avoid whenever possible, — a curious psychological fact is that pain is not always avoided; is indeed often sought and clung to with a strange pertinacity which at first sight seems to suggest a fantastic abnormality. Ahriman has in all ages had his voluntary votaries; the altar of Our Lady of Pain its wilful victims, who will by no means be denied.

Martyrs of religion and patriotism are comprehensible enough. To suffer for eventual good is not illogical. All civilization must be based upon

a readiness to bear evil that benefit may result — either to one's self, or others. The strangeness of the deliberate, wilful choice of dolour demands a more subtle analysis.

Why must so many of us, like Philomel, —

"Lean her breast uptil a thorne,"

to achieve our highest note of life?

The root of it must be sought in the remotest profundities of "the will to live"; in the primal deeps of growth and evolution. All matter maintains a constant struggle to pass from the simple to the complex; to develop sensibilities, to grow nerves, to expand sensation. To what "far-off divine event" the whole of creation thus moves is not yet guessable, but certain it is that the whole mass of life pushes laboriously, passionately, toward a greater capacity to feel, toward enormous specialization of faculty, toward acuteness of function, toward vividness of sentiency. From the lowest form of protoplasm to the highest human intelligence, this tendency, this upward, outward striving is unbrokenly toward more and fuller life. To evade it is to incur death and obliteration. Species and races which relax in intensity are crushed out, swept away, forced to yield place to the unrelaxing. By its means the blind, formless jellies, vaguely swaying in tide-

less darkness, climb through straining æons to incredible capacities, to exquisite flowerings of complex appreciation and emotions.

Hans Christian Andersen allegorized this in his poignant fairy romance of the mermaid who yearned for a human experience, a human soul. Only by a self-inflicted wound was she enabled to transform herself to a biped, fitted to move among the higher forms of life; and always her feet remained so tender *that every step was marked in blood.* To acquire new functions, to develop new faculties, means to enlarge with the higher possibilities of pleasure, the higher nervous capacities of pain. Increase of the number of avenues of delight by its very nature opens new channels for suffering. The higher the organism, the more complex the ganglia, the greater number of points it presents upon which life can touch, the more complete and intense becomes the realization of existence. And the need to achieve a more vivid sense of being drives us along a thousand strange roads. It is this need which allures the explorer to brave equatorial heat, or arctic cold. It leads him down the stream of the uttermost seas, up the summit of towering peaks, to skirt along the knife edge of annihilation, that he may press in more keenly the sense of living. It lies at the source of the athelete's and sportsman's straining of every

faculty, that he may through danger and self-denial experience the delicious quiver of exuberant consciousness of strength and power.

The same need, the same impulse, is at the root of the fasts and macerations of the mystic, that thereby he may string to intenser vibration the nerves of his emotional sentiency. Life! more life! demand they all. Through pain to reach pleasure: the suffering accentuating satisfaction by the keenness of contrast; as hunger long borne sauces the meal to delicious succulence, as fatigue to the point of exhaustion turns the bed to down. The cushioned sentimentalist's horrified sympathy with the poor ignores the intensity of existence of those who walk close to the vanishing-point of the means of a living.

Here, then, is the strange secret of those who seek and cling to pain; — the secret of the flagellants, the self-crucifiers, the wilful valetudinarians, the degenerates, the hysterics. Pain is their only means of feeling keenly the sense of living. Truly degenerate, by some tragic atavism of birth they are thrown back lower in the scale of being. Through some failure of nervous or physical adjustment, they do not respond readily to normal and healthy stimulations. Their nerves are too laxly strung to be vibrant to light or soft touches, as a piano with flaccid strings gives out

tone only to the stroke of a rude hand. The common illusion is that those who turn for stimulation to the excesses of vice — alcohol, drugs, gambling, crime, or sexual riot — are of a too intense nervous organization. The real truth is that their affliction is to be of so dull and relaxed a temperament that they must perforce bang furiously upon the keys of life to awake the necessary resonance, to arouse any pulsation of intense vivification. They must resort to gross means to produce a response. Those of really highly developed nerves shrink from these violent assaults upon their senses, which to them are shattering and destructive by stirring emotions and vibrations too keen for tolerance. Occasionally the finer sort, the sharply strung, plunge into this vortex hoping to escape some grief, or through sheer intellectual curiosity; but invariably they are destroyed by the nervous uproar, and emerge mad, disorganized, or dead.

For the normal, for the general, pain is, in a way, the test of life, of growth — "the turn of the screw" that tautens the strings and makes them quiver with music. The history of the literature of every people records a sudden outburst of song, of full expression, after all the great historic tragedies. The flowering of national genius seems possible only after the roots of the race are drenched and nour-

ished by its own blood. The golden time of Pericles followed the frenzied struggle of the Persian wars. The Augustan age was the immediate successor to the hideous turmoils of Sylla and Marius, of Pompey and Cæsar. The Elizabethans drew a long breath after the wars of the Roses and the religious scufflings of Henry's reign, and the expiration of that breath of relief was in the silver of song and the gold of eloquence. "Only he," says Goethe, who "has despaired upon his bed" may know and utter the mighty truths.

No: though we imagine we seek peace, this is but one of our curious self-delusions. "Not pleasure or happiness," says Carlyle, "but pain, misery, and death are the greatest attractions to men's souls." For only under the whip and spur of pain do we leap the apparently insurmountable barriers, reach our highest possibilities, stretch our faculties to the utmost.

Hearn describes in one of his letters a Polish brigade under fire during the Franco-Prussian war.

"The French batteries are directed upon it; the fire of the mitrailleuses is atrocious. The Polish brigade stands still under the infernal hail, cursed by the German officers for the least murmur: — 'Silence! you Polish hogs!' — while the ground is being strewed with blood and brains and entrails. Hundreds fall; thousands, and the order is always, 'Close up, you Polish hogs!' Just one instant with

the bayonet, — one chance to retaliate; to die like men! But the iron order is to wait. Men sob with rage. 'Silence, you Polish beasts!' And then at last old Steinmetz, smoking his pipe in the carnage, gives a signal, — *the* signal. The bugles ring out the air forbidden ever to be sung or heard at other times — the national air — 'No! Poland is not dead!' And with the crash of brass all that lives of the brigade is hurled at the French batteries. Mechanical power might fling back such a charge, but not human power. For old Steinmetz, smoking his pipe, had made, Schopenhaueresquely, the mightiest appeal to those 'Polish brutes' that man, God, or devil could make."

He had deliberately turned and turned the screw — fear, rage, insult, anguished resentment, age-long memory of national despair — till his human instrument was tuned to the keenest screech of ecstasy, and he could strike the last high note of his battle-symphony in the chord of victory. It is through these horrible intensities that races and nations move forward to power and a wider life.

Which is why arbitration tribunals are so often out of a job, and Peace Societies imagine a vain thing. Every once in so often the nerves of a race demand a frenzy of stimulation, and willy nilly — despite common sense or reason — they will drink of the red wine of war, until they rise from a debauch of blood and tears and suffering, calmed and

strengthened in some strange way by the very agonies endured, to pass onward over the broken hearts and lives of individuals to the unknown end to which they unconsciously tend. When a race loses this appetite for pain, when it fears to wound itself and shed its own ichor, some other race, still with an unquenched lust of suffering, stamps it into the mire, or swallows it piecemeal. And so Ahriman takes his toll from them perforce, if they refuse him willing offerings.

What is true of races is always true of the individuals that are the integers of peoples. They can but live and grow at the price of strain and suffering. If given freely and willingly, this brings its reward; it is a sacrifice of sweet savour. Denied, evaded, part of the price kept back, though they take the wings of the morning and flee unto the uttermost parts of the earth, there shall they find that avenging deity standing ready to exact his uttermost tithe. Heaping the pains of humiliation, of non-development, of conscious inferiority, of contempt, of feebleness of mind and body, of defeat of plans and hopes, upon those who denied the God.

It is the blind, fumbling recognition of this immutable law that has been the norm of all religions, which, with one voice, though in divers tones, have

warned that peace and pleasure blossom only out of the seeds of self-inflicted self-denial and pain.

"Red is the Root of the Law,
And the stem thereof Pain.
Bitter the Leaves of the Vine,
But the Flower, the Flower is white,
Sweet scented as Sandal and Myrrh.
And we crush from its clustering Fruit
The warm secret Wine of our Life."

It is the vague unreasoned consciousness of this that makes the old ladies, clustered together at the baths and cures, brag gently to one another of the superior intensity of their individual ailments. Every tactful physician plays upon this weakness.

"I can see that you have suffered terribly," he says, and is rewarded by a lighting eye and a flood of confidence in one who appreciates the unique value of an individual experiencing a rare extreme of sensation.

"My doctor says my case is a very unusual one," the patient boasts with a proud lift of the head.

"I have one of *my* headaches!" announces the sufferer with a sense of haughty value, as one might speak of an heirloom of incontestable richness; and she looks with distrust and dislike upon one who suggests a simple cure. "My headache" sets one

apart as chosen for a crown — even though it be a circlet of thorns. Robbed of it, one would fall back into the undistinguished, undistinguishable ruck. Every one has known the sense of flatness that comes with the passing of pain, the cure of an illness. With the loss of suffering went also a loss of intensity, a failing of justifiable concentration upon one's self. There is a certain savour in misfortune that springs from a consciousness of being set apart to deal more deeply with life than the fatly healthy and prosperous. One feels that there is something almost vulgar in those who enjoy such commonplace *bien-être*. What can such as they know of the real meaning and profundity of life? Job could not conceal his scorn of his comforters, who had not been picked out from the herd to bear unusual things. How dared they advise one so immensely their superior? Naaman, the Syrian, resented a simple hygienic suggestion that he needed a bath, as thoroughly as all sufferers protest against a plain regimen. Theirs is a matter of quite another sort. Such simplicity may serve for the suggestors, but their ill is a special and superior ill; mysterious, exalted, and unusual. To rob them of it would be grand larceny indeed.

Those whom life has left stranded in the dull back-waters of obscurity cling with passion to their

ailments. Pain is the only proof of their existence. The theft of it would destroy them by sheer inanition.

"Non," cries Pierre de Coulevain, "car le douleur donne à la vie une saveur incontestable. La preuve est que nous exagérons à plaisir notre mal et celui des autres. De plus, nous avons l'instinct que le souffrance nous grandit et nous enoblit. On ne se vante pas d'avoir été plus heureux que celui-ci ou celui-là, mais on se vante d'avoir souffert davantage . . . mais je suis obligé de reconnaître qu'elle est le sel de la vie."

It is possible that through higher development, through the refinement of delicate specialization, we may some day grow to the point where the coarseness of pain may be no longer required. When life will become sufficiently intense through its joys; when we may be so exquisitely attuned that, like wind-harps, a mere breath may set quivering golden vibrations that will give us the immense sense of life for which we yearn. There may come a time when the silent glories of—

"The incomparable pomp of eve"

will awake as enormous a response as now we achieve only through the thunders and horrors of war. There may come a beautiful day when the dreaming passion of the nightingale's voice through the dewy

darkness will give us all the heartache we require. When the sweetness and colour of roses will arouse that ecstasy that is as delicious as pain. When that time comes, we may at last put aside all noise and clamour, all garish, savage means of assuring ourselves that we live, and once more walk in the Gardens of Paradise in the cool of the day, innocent and content, sure of being alive at last through mere perfection of delight.

ENVOY

A PHYSICIAN, visiting an asylum, met in a corridor one of the patients galloping rapidly to and fro upon a walking-stick.

"That 's a fine horse you have there," remarked the doctor soothingly.

The dignified elderly rider reined in his wooden steed for a moment and replied, with a shade of contempt: —

"This is n't a horse, you know. If it were a horse, I could dismount. *This* is a hobby."

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